


DECONSTRUCTING THE WESTERN WORLDVIEW:  
TOWARD THE REPATRIATION AND INDIGENIZATION OF WELLNESS

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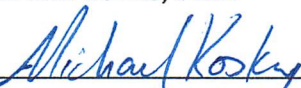
Jacqueline Marie Rahm

RECOMMENDED:

  
Beth Leonard, Ph.D.


  
Theresa John, Ph.D.

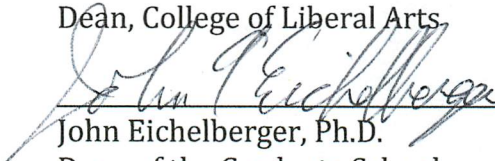
  
Jordan Lewis, Ph.D.

  
Michael Koskey, Ph.D.  
Advisory Committee Chair

  
Beth Leonard, Ph.D.  
Interim Chair, Department of Cross-Cultural Studies

APPROVED:

  
Todd Sherman, M.F.A.  
Dean, College of Liberal Arts

  
John Eichelberger, Ph.D.  
Dean of the Graduate School

12/7/14  
Date



DECONSTRUCTING THE WESTERN WORLDVIEW:  
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A  
THESIS

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By

Jacqueline Marie Rahm, B.A., M.A.

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## Abstract

As Indigenous peoples and scholars advance Native histories, cultures, and languages, there is a critical need to support these efforts by deconstructing the western worldview in a concerted effort to learn from indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing for humanity's future wellbeing. Toward that imperative, this research brings together and examines pieces of the western story as they intersect with Indigenous peoples of the lands that now comprise the United States of America. Through indigenous frameworks and methodologies, it explores a forgotten epistemology of the pre-Socratic and Pythagorean Archaic and Classical Greek eras that is far more similar to indigenous worldviews than it is to the western paradigm today. It traces how the West left behind this timeless wisdom for the "new learning" and the European colonial settlers arrived in the old "New World" with a fragmented, materialistic, and dualistic worldview that was the antithesis to those of Indigenous peoples. An imbalanced and privileged worldview not only justified an unacknowledged genocide in world history, it is characteristic of a psycho-spiritual disease that plays out across our global society. This dissertation suggests that the healing of the western mind rests with shifting the dominant paradigm toward a fundamental axiom of holism found within the life-ways of American Indigenous peoples and also buried within the West's own ancestry, particularly within a misunderstood ancient Greek tradition at the cornerstone of the western world.



Dedicated to the Spirit of Everything

Thank you

To my husband Brian Rahm for his love and friendship

To my parents and family

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## Preface

Before beginning, there are two primary issues to clarify: one is grammatical and the other is in regard to terminology. These linguistic challenges are unavoidable due to the limitations of the English language in identifying and naming Indigenous peoples. This preface explains my approach in this writing to these sensitive concerns.

Throughout the dissertation, I capitalize these proper nouns as follows: *Indigenous peoples*, *Native peoples*, and *the West*. When I use *indigenous* as an adjective as in *indigenous knowledge* or *indigenous scholars*, it is lower case. Similarly, *western worldview* and *western peoples* are lower case. The word *Native* is capitalized in both cases—*Native peoples* and *Native knowledge*—because historically it has been used pejoratively.

The second issue involves the identification of *Indigenous peoples*. There are many terms in use and no single rule for their capitalization. These include *Indigenous peoples*, *Native peoples*, *First Peoples*, *Original Peoples*, *Aboriginal peoples*, *First Nations*, *American Indigenous peoples*, and *American Indians/Alaska Natives/Native Hawaiians*. Their usage varies within western countries including the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The terms *Native Americans* and *American Indians* are often used synonymously, but both are inaccurate and meet with objection by Indigenous peoples. *Native Americans* do not necessarily refer only to the *Original Peoples* who predate European invasion as the term is intended, but the dominant society may think it applies to everyone, regardless of their ancestry, who is born in the United States of America. The term *American Indians* is also problematic. Namely, the word *Indians* identifies a broad base of diverse peoples based on the misnomer that Columbus believed he had landed in India and not on the edge of two large continents unknown to Europeans at the time.

I use *Indigenous peoples*, *Native peoples*, *First Peoples*, and *Original Peoples* interchangeably, generally in a more global context, when referring to an expansive group who share overarching similarities as defined by the definition of *Indigenous peoples* within the international arena. When reviewing the work of other scholars and authors, I tend toward their language usage of these terms.



When referring to Indigenous peoples of these lands that now comprise the United States of America, I use *American Indigenous peoples* to include *American Indians*, *Alaska Natives*, and *Native Hawaiians* as well as the term *Native peoples*. The use of *American Indigenous peoples* is challenging for several reasons. First, on one level, to use *American Indigenous peoples* to refer only to those from the current-day United States is disrespectful to the many Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas: North, South, and Central. There is not, however, a non-conflicting way to refer to Indigenous peoples of the lands that comprise the United States of America, or any citizen of this country for that matter. Despite its presumptuous nature, we do know ourselves as Americans, whereas people from other countries in the Americas call themselves by their country names such as Canadians, Mexicans, Cubans, Peruvians, etc.

Second, on yet another level, some will assert that the term *American Indigenous* infers a colonial supremacy that subsumes Indigenous peoples and even implies a sense of ownership by the dominant culture. Another perspective when choosing *American Indigenous peoples* as a default term for this dissertation, is that *American* and *Indigenous* are both adjectives, where *Indigenous* is the first identifier and *American* the second. This suggests that the primary affiliation is *Indigenous*—as the Original Peoples of the western hemisphere— while also identifying *American Indigenous peoples* as those residing within the current-day United States. There is a similar distinction between the terms *Native Alaskans* and *Alaska Natives*, with the latter being more accurate as it situates Alaska Natives, first and foremost, as the original inhabitants of what is now the state of Alaska.

Also, I need to mention that when I use *American Indigenous* not in reference to peoples but to traditions, worldviews, epistemologies, etc., I capitalize *Indigenous* unlike when I use it alone such as in *indigenous knowledge* and *indigenous ways of knowing*. Importantly, these terminological challenges are due to an on-going colonial narrative and Anglicization of *Indigenous peoples* who are identified most accurately by their own indigenous names, places, and territories.

Lastly, when I refer to *western society* or the *West*, I often use the personal pronoun—we. As a non-indigenous scholar, this is the voice from which I write, and this element of subjectivity is germane to indigenous methodologies. When I use *we*, it refers

generally to those of Euro-American ancestry but also, at times, to those of any ethnicity who through assimilation into western culture identify more with western than indigenous orientations. This distinction is not meant to exacerbate an oppositional stance of *us* vs. *them*; rather, it brings this discomfort from the shadows into the forefront so it can be remedied by our understanding and compassion for this dualistic tendency embedded within western thinking, frameworks, and society.

These grammatical and terminological explanations may seem confusing, but I try to be consistent throughout the dissertation. The tension felt speaks to the complexity inherent within this research and the search for holism.



## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this doctoral project is to deconstruct the western worldview and to show the critical need for a significant epistemological shift toward a unified paradigm with American Indigenous peoples, one based on a fundamental axiom of holism that encompasses *all* of existence. A paradigm shift of such magnitude signifies the reconciliation of dualistic thought—the belief in a binary condition often perceived as oppositional life forces—which has long characterized the western worldview. Toward this endeavor, this research brings together pieces of the western story in unique ways that intersect with the original inhabitants of North America, particularly of what is now the United States of America. It is relevant and applicable, however, more broadly to indigenous and non-Native relations globally. The research begins by examining two knowledge streams: the pre-Socratic tradition of the Archaic and Classical Greek eras and indigenous worldviews and epistemologies brought forth by Native scholars. It investigates where in our forgotten histories these two knowledge streams once converged and shared fundamental similarities. It then follows the West’s divergence from this knowledge by examining the forces that shaped the current western paradigm and how the “new thinking” justified the colonization of Native America through successive generations of distorted and conditioned thought. The research examines the resultant pathology of the psyche that left behind its Original Knowledge—that which transcends yet includes all cultural interpretations and which simply *is*. It suggests necessary conditions for healing and awakening the western mind to what exists within the West’s own ancestry and to that which connects with American Indigenous worldviews. Lastly, it considers the implications of such a seismic shift for an indigenous and non-Native alliance particularly related to the repatriation of wellness inclusive of all aspects and worlds of existence.

Historically, western civilization refers to the spread of ideas and knowledge, generally moving westward from the Middle East, and encompasses the regions from Afghanistan to Spain and Portugal and from Scandinavia to northern Africa. Throughout

history, Indo-European and Semitic peoples (Arabs, Jews, and by the Late Antiquity, Christians, among others), their beliefs, and bodies of knowledge have influenced and interlaced with one another to such degree that it is difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint the origins of the West. Despite the complex identity of the West, the Greco-Roman world, by the Late Antiquity— based on the doctrine of Christianity, the evolution of the sciences through a Judeo-Christian lens, and the rise of property-based wealth—has profoundly shaped the current and prevailing western worldview. Consequently, it has negated and altered the philosophies, epistemologies, and ontologies of the multiple sources of indigenous and tribal ancestry that contribute to the traditions of the West. This research focuses on one of those many strands of influence, one ripple within the current of the western knowledge stream, that is relatively unknown or misunderstood—the pre-Socratic tradition of the Archaic and Classical Greek eras.

The Greeks are of particular concern because of their early influence on the rise of western civilization. Known for their expansionistic tendencies, the Greeks were rapacious colonizers since the 700s BCE. “Between the so-called Dark Ages (1100–800 B.C.) following the presumed fall of the [Mycenaean city-states] and the Greeks’ civilization-defining victory in the Persian Wars (490–479 B.C.) hundreds of self-governing, independent, and expansion-minded Greek city-states arose and prospered throughout the Mediterranean world” (Williams, Jr., 2012, p. 31). Greek colonies spread beyond the Ionian Islands and Aegean region of Asia Minor, what was Anatolia and now Turkey. These colonial settlements went “as far as Cyrene in North Africa, Marseilles in France, and the Costa Brava of Spain” (Williams, Jr., 2012, pp. 32-33). The Athenian Golden Age of the fifth century BCE that characterizes Classical Greece marked the rise of the West’s first powerful civilization, eventually inhabiting settlements that thrived throughout the Mediterranean Aegean, and Black Sea regions.

In his book *Savage Anxieties*, Williams, Jr., (2012), member of the Lumbee Tribe and legal scholar, details how the Classical Greeks used the stereotype of the ruthless and loathsome savage to invent themselves, contrasting the irredeemable nature of the barbarian, one who did not speak Greek, with the self-ascribed superiority of their urban and intellectual polis-based civilization. It gave license to their colonial expansion as they

moved further outward from their political base of mainland Athens and other political centers of Classical Greece. Further, Williams, Jr. (2012) asserts that the Classical Greek's conception of the savage, which he reminds has been projected onto Indigenous peoples for thousands of years, originated in Greek mythology and was narrated in Homer's two epic poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, believed by scholars to have been written in the eighth century BCE. Williams, Jr. (2012) contends that the lawless enemy of civilization—the savage—was born from the images of cyclopean monsters prevalent during the time of the Trojan War waged on the city of Troy by the Achaeans (Mycenaean Greeks).

The polar opposite of this barbaric uncivilized archetype—the noble savage—had its inception with Homer's near contemporary, the Greek poet Hesiod (Williams, Jr., 2012). In his poem, *Works and Days*, which is a retaliation against aristocratic colonial civilization that furthers itself at the expense of the oppressed, Hesiod speaks of a Golden Age, at the dawn of human history, when mortals lived in bountiful and carefree simplicity with nature. Williams, Jr. (2012) identifies these two contrasting images of the savage—the barbarian and the noble primitive—as indicative of a pivotal split within western thinking, marking its propensity toward dualistic thought.

This is an interesting consideration because it leads directly into the focus of this research inquiry—how a pre-Socratic tradition at the cornerstone of Greek civilization was far more similar to indigenous worldviews than to the western paradigm today. This dissertation shows how a misunderstood tradition, one based on a lived philosophy of holism would have understood such polarities—as in the contrasting stereotypes of the barbaric and noble savage—within a cosmology where *everything* exists in an intricacy that comprises the whole of existence. The degradation of this knowledge gave rise to a dualistic worldview.

Although western thought and ideas spread and shifted gradually over time until the present-day, “a line has clearly been drawn in these ancient sands” between the pre-Socratics and the later Greek philosophers whose allegiance to reason, logic, and facts we now associate with and refer to as the western worldview (Brewer, 2006–2007, p. 6). This proverbial divide has become the source of great tension between western and indigenous worldviews deeply impacting indigenous and non-Native histories and relations. The

western worldview spread beyond Europe at the expense of indigenous cultures throughout the world, our focus being American Indigenous peoples of the colonized lands of North America that now comprise the United States of America. The western worldview is fundamentally in conflict with that of Indigenous peoples when it negates other ways of knowing and privileges its principles and standards that determine what is knowledge and how it is acquired. While the West offers a valuable and needed perspective, it tends to view the world myopically, disconnecting from its story and the spirit and unity of knowledge.

This, however, has not always been the condition of the West. The fragmented texts of the ancient Greek pre-Socratic era reveal a natural philosophy steeped in the spiritual from which the sciences arose. Embedded within this ancient philosophy are epistemological themes that help deconstruct the current western worldview and reshape it into the possibilities of its whole potential. These principles are what American Indigenous peoples have long known, carried, and so vehemently protected since the arrival of the colonial explorers whose worldview threatened their bodies of knowledge.

This research makes clear the need for an epistemological shift of the western paradigm: culturally, psychosocially, ecologically, and spiritually. It advocates for the inclusion of an epistemology that arises from and is accessed through an interconnected, intelligent, and living energy field, a way of knowing revealed through myriad traditions of many peoples of the world. This research identifies this reality as a critical element in the deep healing and reconciliation of the West with Indigenous peoples and more broadly with the many worlds of existence. Some academics may dismiss this as new age-ism, and there is good reason to exercise such caution. Truth, however, is alive within indigenous science and natural philosophy, providing relief, remedy, and hope for our collective predicament. If the West suspends its conditioned thinking and deeply listens, we may find our way back to the wholeness resident within our interconnected stories.

## **Research Questions**

This research pulls together the fragmented parts of this forgotten history. It addresses the rationale for deconstructing the western worldview, suggesting a process of

unbinding, re-learning, and awakening that moves toward wholeness and synthesis. It forces us to confront issues of racism, power, colonialism, economic disparity, and greed. While colonization based on domination and exploitation of Indigenous peoples, cultures, and resources may hold a vague sense of discomfort for the West, it continues unquestionably embedded in the fabric of western idealism and is couched in the verbiage of post-colonialism and globalization. Despite these conditions, indigenous identity is alive, ever-present since Columbus arrived on Taíno Indian lands over 500 years ago.

This research leads to difficult questions about decolonization and indigenization, topics western systems and society typically avoid or minimize. Decolonization involves complex issues of land, identity, self-determination, and sovereignty. Tuck and Yang (2012) caution that decolonization is not a metaphor for social justice issues and is incommensurable to decolonizing practices that seek to improve society from within colonial frameworks. Noticeably, there is an emerging discourse on such decolonizing practices within academia particularly related to education, research, and mental healthcare (Berry, 2012; Duran, 2006; Lucero, 2011; Smith, 1999; Wilson & Yellow Bird, 2005) while simultaneously, there is a growing body of literature on indigenous ways of knowing (Cajete, 2000; Deloria, 2006; Fienup-Riordan, 2003; Kawagley, 2006; Nelson, 2008) and movement toward indigenizing or bringing Native values, worldviews, wisdom, practices, and traditions into the culture of today (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2011; Battiste, 2009; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004; Morgan, n.d.; Wilson, 2008). This emphasis in indigenous studies coupled with the groundbreaking work on an elusive pre-Socratic tradition, by British scholar Peter Kingsley (1995, 1999, 2003, 2010), opens the door for further inquiry into deconstructing the western worldview. Drawing from these areas of study, this research links pre-Socratic philosophy with indigenous ways of knowing moving toward a unified approach that makes apparent our collective and intrinsic state of wholeness. It necessitates examining why the West thinks and acts as it does typically from dualistic and exclusionary frameworks. Deconstructing western thought helps awaken us to our responsibility in this interrelated process of our unbinding.

To address this possibility: there are three research questions. First, in what ways is the pre-Socratic tradition and epistemology of the Archaic and Classical Greek periods, as



detailed by iconoclastic scholar Peter Kingsley, fundamentally similar to American Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing? Second, why was the knowledge of the pre-Socratics left behind, and what forces shaped the current western worldview and colonization of the Americas, particularly the United States of America? Third, what is the critical need for shifting the dominant paradigm toward one based on a fundamental axiom of holism, and what are the implications for Indigenous and non-Native relations and wellbeing today?

To answer these questions, I draw from revisionary texts to extract epistemological themes of a pre-Socratic and Orphic-Pythagorean tradition, compare this ancient Greek knowledge with fundamental aspects of indigenous philosophies, ways of knowing, and cosmologies, follow the West's distortion of this Original Knowledge that has resulted in a worldview responsible for the United States' colonial relationship with Native peoples, present an honest discussion about the effects of colonization caused by the disease of our forgetting, and focus on the possibility of healing and wellness by shifting the western worldview toward one based on a fundamental principle of holism commensurate with indigenous worldviews. This inquiry does not suggest a naïve new age panacea for the complex issues concerning indigenous and non-Native relations today, nor does it purport that the ancient pre-Socratic tradition of the West is the same as contemporary applications of traditional knowledge. Instead, it looks for common ground from which to move forward, focusing on our remembering of the knowledge that lies behind and connects our original mythologies.

### **Evolution of the Inquiry**

A deep longing for the Sacred drives this doctoral research project. It combines scholarly inquiry with western Greek mysticism refusing to separate mind from spirit, which became protocol in the eastern Mediterranean region of the West around 400 BCE, marked by the time of Socrates. This process of supplanting local, holistic, bodies of traditional knowledge and spirituality with Greco-Roman culture, in later times Christianity, and with science, led to the widespread conception of the separation of mind and spirit. The academy now provides an avenue for the reunification of what has never

been separate but rather misunderstood and deeply forgotten in the western world. Fortunately, nothing is ever truly lost. Even the minutest ember, if approached with a certain attitude, ignites a power that calls us back to our roots.

In an indigenous-based pedagogy, the researcher's story affects and informs the research and vice versa. Wilson (2008) states, "We cannot remove ourselves from the world in order to examine it" (p.14). It is necessary and helpful within an indigenous methodology to include a part of my story, sharing through a personal lens, the emergence of these research questions.

It is no accident that for me this stirring began in Nepal. This small country lies between India to the south and Tibet to the north and is cradled in some of the highest mountains of the world. Three distinct geographical regions run east to west across Nepal: the Himalaya border with Tibet, and the foothills descend into the *bahad* (hills) that flatten out into the *terai* (lowlands). The turbulent Himalayan rivers cut across the mountain ranges and into the fertile hills and valleys that the Nepalese farm which give way to the dry, sweltering landscape below. The countryside is dotted with earthen houses, lush fields of rice, golden wheat, corn, lentils, yellow mustard in bloom, and shades of climbing bougainvillea. On a clear day from the heat of the *terai*, the Himalaya are a faint speck in the far distance. The contrast between the two is a beautiful illustration of the diversity of the land and its peoples where a felt spirituality pulsates throughout Nepali life.

The Peace Corps provided the opportunity for my introduction to Nepal. The experience made me call into question western philosophies and awakened a different way of being in the world. The energy of Nepal opened a cavernous longing for connection often absent in the West. I resonated deeply with the rhythms of Nepali culture, the cycles of nature that governed daily life, and with the shamanic healing traditions of different ethnic groups found throughout Nepal. *Sadhai Nepal mero mutu ma cha*—Nepal is always in my heart. Viewing life through these new perspectives felt natural, and my resistance to western culture intensified, pulling me into the unconscious recesses of its conditioning.

In western systems of academia, healthcare, business, etc., the dominant, linear worldview obfuscates holistic ways of perceiving, seeing, and being in the world. Western systems require attention to the mechanization of details often excluding principles of

interconnectivity and holism as expressed within indigenous pedagogies. Becoming conscious of this fragmentation, I began questioning the extent to which the conceptual separation from the relatedness of *all* of life through a myopic western worldview contributes toward our global economic, socio-cultural, and environmental crises of today.

I returned to Nepal several times to study the cultural phenomenology of psychopathology. The Tharu people of the *terai* shared their stories and medicine ways, and there were two particularly significant resident healers. The *Desbhandiya* credited his shamanic healing work to God working through him, while the *Maharaj*, whose priestly lineage traced back to Gautama the Buddha, welcomed people at the small monastery where he lived deep in the jungle. For the Tharu of southern Nepal, psychopathology is a cultural phenomena addressed within the local context of healing. Within this milieu, the line of sanity is blurred, and those who appear mentally ill by western definition may be revered as saints and sages of a different world.

My interest in traditional healing and wellness continued into the indigenous studies doctoral program at University of Alaska Fairbanks. Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley, a former professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, introduced his course, *Indigenous Ways of Knowing*, by saying, “The cold informed me.” The silence that followed as the class reflected on these four words instantly penetrated and nourished that deep longing within. Dr. Kawagley was alluding to a way of knowing, of communicating, of bringing forth knowledge from another world to the physical that allowed the Yupiit to not only survive but to thrive in their Arctic environment. Dr. Kawagley’s words, “the cold informed me,” were piercing, and their meaning, in essence, has become the focus of this work.

There have been numerous obstacles to arriving at this place with the dissertation. As a non-Native student in an emerging field of indigenous scholars, I questioned my motives and contribution to the program. I increasingly felt uncomfortable within rising indigenous voices. This was due not from how Native colleagues received me, but how I felt in my own skin. I often relied on the residual effect of Nepal and how it fundamentally changed my worldview.

One class discussion was particularly unsettling, and this discomfort begged to be reconciled. The question was, “Can non-Natives have an indigenous worldview?” My heart

said yes, yet I felt caught, exposed, because honest self-reflection revealed that I was living vicariously through my affinity for Indigenous peoples and cultures. What was percolating underneath was a deep longing to know the “indigenous” traditions of the West. I relentlessly asked, “Where are the original teachings of the West? Do they even exist?” I acutely knew I had searched as far as I could by looking to indigenous cultures; I had hit what felt like a brick wall.

Diane Longboat, a Mohawk mentor and friend provided guidance again at this difficult time. This Elder of the Turtle Clan of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations (known as the Iroquois Confederacy) has dedicated her life to the traditional, ceremonial, and healing ways that she makes available to people of all backgrounds who come with an open heart. Diane is part of a community that maintains a sacred fire on their ancestral homelands.

It is our intention at the Sacred Fire of the Great Peace to offer a safe, loving, nurturing, and authentic spiritual gathering space for truehearted respectful seekers of Truth. We share our ceremonies with you to enable you to feel the essence of the Creator, to make your prayers, and to receive your answers. Be proud of who you are and your lineage. Seek a relationship with the Creator and your Ancestors who will guide you to your Original Instructions from the beginning of creation when we were all indigenous, attached to homelands and to the Sacred. (D. Longboat, personal communication, January 21, 2013)

When I first sat at the fire, Diane cautioned, “I’m not here to make you Indian but to teach you the Indian way of prayer so you find your own truth.” During that first visit to the fire, I dreamt of the four sacred hoops: the red, white, black, and yellow. The white hoop was visibly out of alignment and needed the others to find its way home. Through this journey of personal inquiry and with the dissertation ahead, there was no place to go but further into the wound of the western worldview. When Diane suggested the work of Peter Kingsley, the pieces started coming together in ways the mind could never have planned.

Kingsley’s (2010) latest book *A Story Waiting to Pierce You: Mongolia, Tibet and the Destiny of the Western World*, was captivating, yet I was cautious of this British scholar steeped in ancient Greek history and mythology. I was more comfortable with indigenous knowledge than Greek philosophy. Kingsley’s (1995, 1999, 2003, 2010) books, however,

provide missing and critical pieces of the western story. It is the story of a sacred tradition of the pre-Socratics before successive philosophers and thinkers misrepresented this natural philosophy, and its alteration evolved into the more scientific, western worldview. In an interview entitled *Remembering What We Have Forgotten*, Kingsley summarizes the origins of western thought.

Most of the problems we have in the West are not due to the fact that at the origins of Western civilization there's something fundamentally wrong. On the contrary, there's something infinitely precious at the origins of our civilization. The trouble is that it's been lost because we started taking it for granted. (Whittaker, 2011, p. 1)

Kingsley's earlier books, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic, In the Dark Places of Wisdom*, and *Reality* interpret an ancient pre-Socratic tradition, primarily of Empedocles and Parmenides. Trained as a scholar, Kingsley's writings contain copious notes and references and reveal his innate understanding of these teachings that other classical scholars have been unable or unwilling to see. *A Story Waiting to Pierce You*, however, reads slightly differently than his earlier works. It is the creation story of this pre-Socratic tradition. In the foreword, Beautiful Painted Arrow of the North Central New Mexico Picuris Pueblo Indians, Tslew-the-koyeh, calls the book a "true *encanto*, an incantation" (Kingsley, 2010, p. XIIV).

This is the real thing. In each paragraph of the book the Spirit is there. This is what the native people of the Americas have been trying to say, but were never permitted to. This song is the song of wisdom that we native people have not been allowed to sing. This book is not just Peter Kingsley's wisdom. It is their wisdom, our wisdom. And it needs to be spoken, to be sung and heard again for the sake of the young ones. (Kingsley, 2010, pp. XIIV-XIV)

Kingsley's work and the validation from indigenous perspectives brought into focus where and how this research inquiry moves.

The initial dissertation proposal had a different focus at the start, and it is helpful to understand its evolution. Originally, the proposal addressed indigenizing the mental health system. While working as a therapist at a residential treatment center for youth from across Alaska, I primarily saw Alaska Native clients and their families. Often the youth came

from other short-term facilities and were referred for running away, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, defiance, rage, impulse dyscontrol, and other mental and behavioral health conditions. For parents and guardians it was a secure placement and for some a last resort.

The pressing issue, however, is that there is virtually no research indicating that evidence-based mental health practices are effective for Alaska Native and American Indian populations (Gone & Alcántara, 2007). Clinical services based on the medical model of diagnosis, medication, treatment plans, behavioral management, and psychotherapy often have little meaning and relevance for Native peoples. Not only is treatment often irrelevant, especially for those who come from villages, the institutionalized setting may be re-traumatizing for the client. It is known that the effects of historical trauma and oppression passed down generationally influence the mental health status of Native peoples to the present (Brave Heart, 2004a, 2004b; Coyhis, 2006; Duran, 1995, 2006; Napoleon, 1996; Wexler, n.d., 2009a, 2009b). Western healthcare, however, omits the connection between wellness and the experiences of colonization, including the loss and degradation of people, land, language, culture, identity, and self-determination and fails to provide culturally appropriate systems of care that understand these issues.

Despite the pressing need to provide culturally relevant services, indigenizing mental healthcare requires a significant shift in thought and behavior that the clinical system currently does not comprehend or accommodate. There are many barriers to providing culturally driven approaches within the mental health system including the lack of Native administrators, clinicians, and staff, an entrenched medical and behavioral approach to mental health issues, and a fee system based on billable hours for which only certain services apply. Because of these obstacles, I turned my focus back to community healing and grassroots wellness movements. Native communities are increasingly recognizing the necessity of addressing mental health issues through the revitalization of their indigenous values, traditions, and practices, providing a culturally appropriate context for healing and wellness absent from clinical environments. This was the impetus for initiating a community wellness dialogue with interested Alaska Native participants in the Fairbanks community.

*The Alaska Native Dialogue on Healing and Wellness* came together in the spring of 2012 at the Morris Thompson Cultural Center in Fairbanks, Alaska. There were fifteen participants from different Alaska Native cultures including Elders, community members, and University of Alaska Fairbanks' faculty and students. I convened the dialogue as an effort to highlight and further bring forward Alaska Native perspectives on healing and wellness. After meeting with the director of Fairbanks Native Association and the director of FNA's Behaviors Health Services, they voiced their support for the community dialogue.

The design for the pilot study used a talking circle format to facilitate conversations with Elders and community members. Elders are cultural treasures and libraries of knowledge. Elders who carry cultural traditions and worldviews link the ways of the past, present, and future (Wilson, 1996). They are reminders of the depth of the original teachings of peoples of all backgrounds and help bring this research alive. The dialogue on healing and wellness with Alaska Native participants in which Elders were an integral part helped hone this research topic.

The circle is a universal symbol found in cultures around the world and reflected throughout nature. Cardinal (2001) writes, "The circle is a human cultural expression of nature, of natural and supernatural experience: the universe" (p.181). The circle is the physical application of a cosmological philosophy used for sharing, healing, community-building, decision-making, and governance within cultures linked to the rhythms of the natural world (Forest, 2000; Graveline, 1998). Talking circles create an environment, a sense of sacred space, which allows people to share from their hearts and listen from a deep and inclusive place within. It is noted, however, that this is an adaptation of a tradition that is used ceremonially in some indigenous cultures. Consequently, some may disapprove of its use outside of local cultures while others welcome the adaptation of what may not be traditionally practiced any longer.

Using the circle format, the group discussed the following questions. What is healing and wellness? What does decolonizing mean, and how is it related to wellbeing? What is the need and interest for an indigenous healing and wellness program in Fairbanks? Appendix B provides a summary of participant responses.

Participants readily agreed that healing and wellness are important issues, but what they mean and how to approach them are challenging and elusive questions. Undoubtedly, there is a link between wellness and assimilation—the rapid and forced change from Alaska Native cultural values and practices to western ways of thinking and living. The mental and behavioral health problems that have resulted are symptoms and responses to this trauma over 500 years long. To further complicate matters, the social services complex addresses these issues with the same mindset and worldview that helped bring them into existence.

Although the dialogue was a positive experience that may contribute toward future wellness efforts, it caused me to again re-think the dissertation. Instead of focusing on indigenizing the mental health system or on indigenous-based wellness initiatives within the community, my best contribution as a non-Native researcher is to address the deconstruction of the western worldview. I want to know who we are and why we do what we do. It is an essential step toward coming together with Native peoples to address the complex and urgent issues particularly related to healing and wellbeing. My search comes full circle into the wounding of the western mind to consciously join with Native peoples in healing, reconciliation, and spiritual partnership for the work that lay ahead.

## **Methods and Design**

The western worldview educates that scientifically driven research is the most legitimate and justified method of study. There is a new genre of writing, however, that is based on other equally valid ways of researching. In *The Authentic Dissertation: Alternative Ways of Knowing, Research, and Representation*, Four Arrows, Don Trent Jacobs, (2008) of Cherokee/Creek heritage, explores how “research can regain its authentic core and find its true place in the natural order once more” (Foreword, para. 2). His text features authors whose creative, reflective, and diverse approaches, he says, can address pressing issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century such as “warfare, global warming, social and ecological injustices, domestic violence, racism, economic despair, loss of commons etc.” (Introduction, para. 2).

The authors use indigenous methodologies, among others, reaching standards of excellence by using and developing new tools that push boundaries and chart new



territory. The goal is not to discredit western research but to provide alternative ideas and values that are equally meaningful and valid. Four Arrows dismisses claims that this style of research lacks rigor and quality and cites references that address the ontological and epistemological basis of alternative dissertations. In my research, I aspire toward this authenticity that excites, stimulates, and challenges us to think outside the box and plunge into the unknown to address deconstructing the western worldview from practical and spiritual perspectives as well as inner experiences. To do this, I use a combination of indigenous approaches including decolonizing methodologies (Smith, 1999), tribal critical race theory (Brayboy 2006), holographic epistemology (Meyer, 2001, 2008, 2011), and research as ceremony (Wilson, 2008), as well as mindful inquiry for social science research (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998).

In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith (1999) helps to unravel the colonized mind. She speaks candidly about the historical and current impacts of research born from imperialist and colonial ideology that benefits and perpetuates the interests of the state while disparaging and harming Indigenous peoples. Her work educates both indigenous and non-Native researchers about these traumatic and sensitive issues that until now have not been explicitly written and revealed within academia. For researchers, she advises that humility and ethical responsibility are requisite. She states that the criteria of the researcher should be based on the “clarity of one’s spirit, good-heartedness, understanding of personal baggage and practical usefulness” (Smith, 1999, p. 10). These qualities prompt researchers to question their conditioning and bias as well as the history of research, allowing space for liberating discourse that promotes accountability, healing, and genuine partnership with and between Indigenous peoples.

Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit), advanced by Brayboy (2006), has its roots in several disciplines and is greatly influenced by critical race theory (CRT). While CRT seeks to critique, expose, and change societal and legal structures embedded with racism and other forms of discrimination, Brayboy states, “it does not address American Indians’ liminality as both legal/political and racialized beings or the experience of colonization”(pp. 428-429). Brayboy applies TribalCrit to education and hopes more

broadly it will help “center Indigenous ways of knowing and lead to American Indian sovereignty and self-determination” (p. 441).

Meyer (2001, 2008, 2011) appeals to Indigenous peoples to bring forth their epistemologies and to a sense of authenticity which recognizes that the myriad ways people experience and know the world are all significant. Meyer (2001, 2008), through interviews with Hawaiian Elders, articulates an epistemology where the “spirituality of knowledge” is the golden thread that weaves through a Hawaiian way of knowing. Accordingly, knowledge is not of the mind; it is not related to concepts and logic but is driven by a primordial intelligence connected with all life forces. Meyer (2011) further develops this work into a holographic epistemology evident within indigenous principles, cultures, and sources throughout the world suggesting an underlying, universal way of knowing and perceiving the world. Meyer’s work is transformative for many reasons; most poignantly, she equates the denial of indigenous epistemologies through “power, hegemony, colonization, racism, and oppression” as a lack of awareness (Meyer, 2008, p. 218). This is the primary reason for the need for an epistemological and paradigm shift of the western worldview.

Native science, rooted in indigenous cosmologies, is founded upon an ancient language expressed within the natural world and is based on a relational worldview (Cajete, 2000). This way of being fosters accountability to the communal—the community—and includes people, the environment, land, and the cosmos. Wilson (2008) indicates that research, if approached as ceremony, helps to cultivate, nurture, and steward these relationships. Within a relational worldview, Native science and ceremony merge as powerful tools of inquiry.

In their text, Bentz and Shapiro (1998) describe mindful inquiry as a synthesis of critical social science, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and Buddhist practice—terms explored in Chapter 3 on methodology. Briefly, mindful inquiry encompasses multiple methods focusing not on the details of those methods but on the process in which the researcher engages to choose his/her research and approach. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) believe that within an “intellectual, multicultural, multidisciplinary, and multiparadigmatic world,” the researcher is likened to an “applied philosopher” where his/her inner self,

outer world, worldview, and values are linked to the research in meaningful ways (p. xiv). Mindful inquiry can be a meditative and applied research approach embodying elements common to both eastern and pre-Socratic philosophies.

To summarize, using a combination of indigenous methodologies and mindful inquiry, this research outlines emergent epistemological themes of a largely misunderstood pre-Socratic tradition. It looks for fundamental similarities with indigenous knowledge systems and ways of knowing—points of commonality—that lay behind our cultural differences. Next, it traces the West’s radical departure from this knowledge around the time of Socrates into the present-day United States of America as evidenced through systematic processes of colonization and policies of extermination, assimilation, and cultural and linguistic hegemony. The research examines colonization as a psycho-spiritual pathology while considering possibilities of liberating ourselves from this mentality. It suggests the further need to deconstruct the western world culturally, psychosocially, ecologically, and spiritually and offers strategies for reclaiming our inherent state of wellness not only with Indigenous peoples, but the *whole* of life.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this inquiry centers on a pivotal concern. How can the western world contribute toward indigenous healing and wellness when it is so confused and disconnected from its Original Knowledge? What can it possibly offer? Kingsley’s comments about the predicament of the West bring insight:

We, in our insistence on defying nature, are obsessed with keeping everything going—with constantly asking *what do we do next?* But what if that’s not the right question? What if even our efforts to do good or bring change or help or heal are, unknown to us, the subtlest forms of violence? What if we actually have to do nothing: just go deeper, wait? What if all the frenzy and hyperactivity of Western civilization that we’re experiencing nowadays is like an auto-immune disease. Because if the auto-immune system in a body stops working properly it tends to become hyperactive. What if we need not to keep creating fantasies of a better future but to rest, to go back to that mysteriously fruitful state of helplessness

known to the ancient Greeks as *aporia*, “pathlessness”? What if we were to dare say: we have reached the point where we don’t know where to go?

(Whittaker, 2011, p. 4)

The premise of this research is that the role of the West at this urgent time is to rest and to remember this Original Knowledge. It is to stop and to strip away, to deconstruct the western mind. This paradigm shift enables the West to take its place with Indigenous peoples and contribute toward and promote true pathways of healing, wholeness, and reconciliation.

Elders talk about mending the sacred hoop of the red, yellow, black, and white peoples. Joining the circle necessitates a major epistemological shift of the current western paradigm and worldview. According to the Seventh Fire Prophecy of the Anishnabek, at this moment, we are again given the choice to come together in peace and cooperation. If we do not collaborate with Creation, we will destroy ourselves. This is the time of purification. In 1995, at a conference hosted by Six Nations that included Elders from Tibet, New Zealand, Malaysia, Mexico, and South America, Hopi Elder Thomas Banyacya stated, “The Hopi is looking for a white brother... We will create a spiritual circle where we join the material and the spiritual together and we will take care of the whole world in a spiritual way as well as with the fabulous inventions” (Hill & Monture, 1995, p. 102). We can fulfill this vision. If the West, the “lost white brother,” finds its way home, we may recover our relationship with Indigenous peoples, bringing our hearts and minds together as one. It is our emerging story, and its time has come.



## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

Deconstructing the western worldview toward its re-indigenization is the central theme of this dissertation. We are often unaware of our cultural beliefs and values until we step outside of these frameworks and open to other perspectives, knowledge systems, and ways of knowing. There is a saying what we do not understand we fear, and what we fear, we destroy. We make wrong what challenges our worldview. This has been the pattern of the West evidenced by the privileging of its knowledge and epistemology to the detriment of Indigenous peoples, the natural world, and ourselves. There are many indicators this is not a sustainable path.

The European colonial settlers sought to eradicate the “savage Indian.” To the West’s disbelief, it is the “barbaric” that now provides the antidote to the cumulative effects of our actions; the remedy rests within the “other” who we have rejected within. Indigenous philosophies, knowledge, and science are catalyzing the West into the remembrance and reclamation of an ancient spirit of the western worldview. This literature review turns to and learns from indigenous history and current frameworks to facilitate this process of modifying colonized thinking.

There are four major themes presented in this literature review, which serve to highlight indigenous perspectives and to stir the memory of what has long been forgotten in the West. The themes are indigenism, worldviews, traditional knowledge, and Native ways of knowing. The first provides an introduction to indigenism. It addresses the historical, political, and legal evolution of the term *Indigenous peoples* (Niezen, 2003; UNESCO, 2001; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Social Policy and Development, 2004). The second theme looks at the divide between indigenous and western worldviews (Barnhardt, 1998; Fixico, 2003; Hart, 2010; Kawagley, 2006; Little Bear, 2009; Suzuki and Knudston, 1993). It makes evident the need for this research inquiry. The third theme provides an overview of traditional knowledge. It tracks the evolution of the term within the international arena and efforts to protect and

safeguard it for future generations (Commission on Intellectual Property Rights, 2002; UNESCO, 2003a; UNESCO, 2003b; World Intellectual Property Organization, 2001). This section then looks at traditional knowledge as it pertains to three main areas: Native science (Cajete, 2000; Kawagley, 2006; Underwood, 1990), natural democracy (Akwews, n.d.; Grinde, Jr. & Johansen, 1991; Johansen, 1982; Johansen, 1998; Wallace, 1994), and traditional medicine (Deloria, 2006; Kawagley, 2006; Mohatt & Eagle Elk, 2000; Sarangerel, 2000). The last theme addresses Native ways of knowing. It focuses on the work of three current indigenous scholars who bring forth their respective Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian epistemologies in their research (Drabek, 2012a; John, 2010; Meyer, 2001, 2008, 2011). Together these four themes—indigenism, worldview, traditional knowledge, and Native ways of knowing—establish the foundation for deconstructing the western worldview and for a unifying approach toward knowledge based on an original commonality between western and indigenous traditions, epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies. Throughout this review, I provide some commentary and critical examination to continually link these themes to this research story.

## **Indigenism**

Currently, there are approximately 370 million Indigenous people in the world ranging from the tribes of the Amazon to the nomads of Mongolia and from the Inuit of the Arctic to the Aborigines of Australia and New Zealand. They are distinct in their cultures, languages, and traditions representing at least 5,000 different peoples, according to the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (2012). Indigenous peoples share a common circumstance; they are the original inhabitants or First Peoples of a particular area or environment. Global indigenism may seem like a paradox in terms, but Niezen (2003) calls it an international distinction that refers to a primordial identity since time immemorial (p.3).

Indigenous peoples have been colonized, invaded, or settled within their territories by dominant societies (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Social Policy and Development, 2004). At the very least, they have been marginalized making them more susceptible to adverse economic, environmental, socio-political, and

health conditions (World Bank, 2010). The terms *Indigenous peoples* and *tribal peoples* are used synonymously. Expression within these categories, for which there was no need in the distant past, greatly varies. Indigenous peoples are from different regions, live in diverse conditions, and have distinct lifestyles. There is often, however, a common sense of disenfranchisement that aligns them with a common indigenous agenda.

Indigenous peoples have been romanticized by some audiences who associate “ecological, spiritual and egalitarian ideals with indigenous identity” incognizant of the broader historical context in which the term is situated (Niezen, 2003, p. 11). Niezen (2003) emphasizes that indigenism originates from and is steeped in human rights and the politics of identity. In an era of globalization, Indigenous peoples have united as an international group to push against the forces of cultural homogeneity, the erosion of sovereign rights, and the power of self-determination (Niezen, 2003).

In 1923, a representative of the Haudenosaunee, Six Nations of the Grand River, Cayuga chief Deskaheh traveled to Geneva to present a letter of grievance to the League of Nations. In his appeal to the Secretary-General, he requested the Confederacy’s inclusion in the League and England’s compliance with a treaty signed in 1784 (Calí Tzay, 2007). The chief’s requests were dismissed without acknowledgement. Similarly, in 1925, Maori leader W.T. Ratana accompanied by a large delegation personally submitted a claim to the League concerning the Treaty of Waitangi between the Maori and Great Britain (Calí Tzay, 2007). Like the Cayuga chief, his plea was dismissed by the League of Nations. Unbeknownst to these leaders, their efforts would later become “one of the main precursors of the current fight of indigenous peoples at the international level” (Calí Tzay, 2007, p. 1).

Some decades later with growing attention from indigenous activists including leaders, Elders, and community and tribal members, indigenous rights entered the international dialogue. Although international law has no legal jurisdiction, indigenous representatives thought it a partial remedy to their struggles with nation states that might find embarrassment when their treatment of peoples was shown to fall beneath world standards (Akwesasne Notes, 2005, p. 11). In 1977, the United Nations held the first International Non-governmental Organization (NGO) Conference on *Discrimination against*



*Indigenous Populations in the Americas*. Niezen (2003) summarizes the unique relationship of the NGO representatives:

These delegations are somehow seen as speaking with one voice, representing a unified way of life, defending itself against the destructive forces of modernity. The clearest expression of human diversity can thus be found in a category now widely referred to as *indigenous peoples*; yet the very creation of this category involves a common origin, is predicated upon a global sameness of experience, and is expressed through the mechanisms of law and bureaucracy, the culprits most commonly associated with the steady gains of cultural uniformity. (p. 2)

The conference was followed by similar international meetings and led to the formation of the Economic and Social Council of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982.

The inaugural meeting of the Working Group became the starting point for ongoing communication between Indigenous peoples and the United Nations (UNESCO, 2001). The term *Indigenous peoples* was evolving as an international legal category to refer to culturally distinct peoples who share traditional identities linked to land and culture and whose histories are tied to experiences of colonization, invasion, oppression, and marginalization. In attempting to define *Indigenous peoples*, the Working Group did not adhere to a rigid definition but advocated for the self-identification of its members (UNESCO, 2001). This has become its most salient feature while elements of commonality and consensus noticeably exist.

José Martínez Cobo of Ecuador served as Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and was charged with addressing a wide range of human rights issues. His final report was submitted between 1981-1984 and contributed toward the development of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. In 1987, the United Nations published Cobo's working definition of *Indigenous peoples*, a description, which has become widely cited internationally.

Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies

now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems. (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Social Policy and Development, 2004, p. 2)

The International Labour Organization (ILO) provides a similar understanding of *Indigenous peoples* that is contained in Article 1 of the 1989 Convention No. 169. The following is the summary provided by the Convention that went into effect in 1991.

This Convention applies to:

- a) tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations;
- (b) peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

(International Labour Organization, 1989, Part 1, Article 1, sections 1(a) and 1(b))

Self-identification remains a fundamental element in the ILO's definition of *Indigenous peoples*. This essential feature allows for the fluidity of meaning and for Indigenous peoples to define themselves on their own terms. Niezen (2003) states, "the ambiguity of the term is perhaps its most significant feature" (p, 19).

In 1985, the Working Group began developing international standards concerning the rights of Indigenous peoples. This led to the 1993 draft of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. After an arduous review process, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration in 2007. Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States voted against the Declaration; later all four countries finally announced their support of the document. "The Declaration goes beyond previous international statements

on Indigenous rights, especially in key areas like self-determination, rights to lands, territories, and resources, cultural integrity, and respect for existing treaty rights” (Davis, 2007, p. 2). Setting the precedent for international standards, its weakness rests with the controversy over its non-binding legal status. The Declaration and its implementation are in its infancy, but the grievances are long-standing.

The global identity of Indigenous peoples and the legal protection of their rights have been necessitated by the egregious effects of the West and the modern world on traditional cultures. While those in the United States today whose ancestors began settling these Native lands sometime in the past 500 years may consider themselves from this place, the term *indigenous* within this context of meaning is a label that obviously does not apply. The unification of Indigenous peoples as a collective voice makes noticeable the tension along the indigenous-western divide.

Indigenism confers a sense of connection, of belonging, and makes apparent the disconnection and predicament of the West. The separation between Native and non-Native underlies and prompts this research inquiry. To deconstruct the western worldview, we cross this chasm by going into what separates to ultimately discover what unites. Halemakua, a Native Hawai’ian, Kaupuna healer, said, “We are all indigenous” (Meyer, 2008, p. 222). Meyer (2008) interprets the Elder’s words to mean there is a universal, rhythmic nature to our existence that we engage by coming into “right” relationship that is essential for the modern world. Meyer cautions, however, saying that “to take this universal idea into race politics strips it of its truth” (p. 231). This is tenuous ground, and to consider where indigenous and western worlds merge within a unified paradigm, we first turn to the literature that shows where they part, to our divergent worldviews.

## **Worldviews**

In preparation for that historic 1977 NGO Conference in Geneva, the United Nations requested three position papers that spoke to the struggles of Indigenous peoples. John Mohawk (Sotsisowah) of the Seneca Nation was an emerging indigenous leader, scholar, and social activist at the time. He became renowned for his indigenous intellect grounded in

local philosophies traditions but with far-reaching and visionary implications (Barreiro, 2010). Mohawk prepared those early papers, which were first scrutinized and approved by the Haudenosaunee Council of Chiefs before being given to the western world in Geneva. The papers “point to the destruction of the Natural World and the Natural World peoples as the clearest indicator that human beings are in trouble on this planet. It is a basic call to consciousness” (Akwesasne Notes, 2005, pp. 82-83). Mohawk further states that it was the first time that the abuses of western civilization toward one another, the planet, and themselves were exposed by an indigenous nation to an international body. Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Onondaga, delivered the opening statement at the Conference. As agreed upon by the delegates, Lyons spoke for the Natural World and contends, “the message fell upon the deaf ears of authority” (Akwesasne Notes, 2005, p. 21).

Why does the West not hear the messages of Indigenous peoples? This is a historically complex question that points to broader philosophical and spiritual issues of how Indigenous peoples and the West perceive the world differently. The West has never comprehended the plea made by Indigenous peoples on behalf of the natural world and the relationship between the health of the planet and future generations as the delegates tried to convey at the U.N. Conference. Commonly, the western mind intellectualizes and objectifies what the indigenous commonly intuit and knows intimately. This distinction underlies the discourse on worldviews that has garnered much attention in academia, particularly within the last several decades.

Worldview is likened to a cognitive map, the mental lens through which we see the world, and consists of the principles, values, and traditions we use to make sense of it (Kawagley, 2006). Hart (2010) elaborates:

Worldviews are cognitive, perceptual, and affective maps that people continuously use to make sense of the social landscape and to find their ways to whatever goals they seek. They are developed throughout a person’s lifetime through socialization and social interaction. They are encompassing and pervasive in adherence and influence. Yet they are usually unconsciously and uncritically taken for granted as the way things are. (p. 2)

Hart (2010) warns of the limitations of discussing worldviews because they are determined primarily through mental processes. Since the term originates within the dominant society steeped in a cognitive orientation, an inherent bias exists. This predisposition negates affective, sensate, symbolic, and metaphysical ways of interpreting the world, rendering them less credible and favoring western principles of science, rationality, and logic. Walker (2004) calls the silencing of indigenous worldviews an effective tool of colonialism that continues to marginalize indigenous epistemologies. In *Jagged Worldviews Colliding*, Little Bear (2009) concurs stating colonialism “forces a singular world order by suppressing the diversity of human worldviews” (p. 77). It is critical, therefore, to bring forward indigenous worldviews by looking to the philosophies, values, and customs from which they arise.

Generalized characteristics of indigenous and western worldviews exist and when juxtaposed, their differences become even more apparent. This comparison is not meant to privilege a dichotomous approach to learning prevalent in western educational settings. Instead, it calls attention to the critical need for Indigenous peoples to present their respective cultural philosophies and epistemologies that have been silenced by the dominant society. The western worldview is characterized as linear, mechanistic, analytic, scientifically derived, and time-oriented, and the indigenous as circular, fluid, relational, orally transmitted, and nature-based. The following comparison of the principles that guide indigenous and western worldviews is an adaptation from Suzuki and Knudston (1993) provided by Barnhardt (1998, para. 9).

#### Indigenous Worldview

Spirituality is embedded in all elements of the cosmos

Human have responsibility for maintaining harmonious relationship with the natural world

Need for reciprocity between human and natural worlds—resources are viewed as gifts

#### Western Worldview

Spirituality is centered in a single supreme being

Humans exercise dominion over nature to use it for personal and economic gain

Natural resources are available for unilateral human exploitation

Nature is honored routinely through daily spiritual practice

Spiritual practices are intermittent and set apart from daily life

Human thought, feelings, and words are inextricably bound to all other aspects of the universe

Human thought, feelings, and words are formed apart from the surrounding world

Human role is to participate in the orderly designs of nature

Human role is to dissect, analyze and manipulate nature for own ends

Respect for elders is based on their compassion and reconciliation of outer-and inner-directed knowledge

Respect for others is based on material achievement and chronological old age

Sense of empathy and kinship with other forms of life

Sense of separateness from and superiority over other forms of life

View proper human relationship with nature as a continuous two-way, transactional dialogue

View relationship of humans to nature as a one-way, hierarchical imperative

In the literature, there has been growing emphasis on indigenous worldviews (Cajete, 2000, Fixico, 2003, Hart, 2010, Kawagley, 2006, Little Bear, 2009). In Native philosophies, everything consists of energy and is imbued with spirit. All things that exist pulsate with life and are extensions of a greater, intelligent design. Everything contains this essence and flows from the same source. Relationships between all aspects are inextricably linked and paramount in maintaining balance within the cycles of life and death. Indigenous peoples were natural ecologists and stewards of the Earth long before these terms became commonly used in the English language. Fienup-Riordon (1990) refers to Native peoples as the “original ecologists” (p. 32). This description only has meaning when it includes the adherence to both natural and spiritual laws of ethical relationships. Within Native America, nature and spirituality are inseparable; the Earth is sacred, and nature is the place of worship (Cajete, 2000). How this relationship is expressed, however, varies from and within nations, tribes, and peoples and is place-based, yet indigenous philosophies remain fundamentally the same.

A culture lives its worldview through its values, principles, customs, and traditions that make its philosophy personal and practical. Little Bear (2009) elaborates on the value of wholeness within indigenous cultures. This quality embodies strength, sharing, honesty, and kindness, and he likens these attributes to the “four petals of a flower that when blooms creates balance, harmony and beauty” (Little Bear, 2009, p. 79). As one of many initiatives to revitalize cultural traditions in Alaska, Native Elders have outlined traditional values of their regions. From this initiative, there is now a *Traditional Values of Alaska* poster that highlights the Saint Lawrence Yup’ik, Cup’ik, Bristol Bay Yup’ik, Unangax, Unangan/Unangas, Athabascan, Kodiak Alutiiq, Northwest Arctic Iñupiaq, North Slope Iñupiaq, and Southeast Tribal values. A set of shared core values emerges that guide communities, educators, and students. These values include, “respect for Elders, respect for nature, respect for others, love of children, providing for family, knowledge of language, wisdom, spirituality, responsibility, unity, compassion, love, dignity, honoring the ancestors, honesty, humility, humor, sharing, caring, cooperation, endurance, and hard work” (Barnhardt, 2005, p. 7).

In the seminal book *A Yupiaq Worldview*, Kawagley (2006) shows how these values are lived through an Alaska Native worldview. Although there is great diversity among Alaska Native peoples who have different languages, dialects, and traditions specific to the land and environment in which they live, there are common threads among the many cultural groups, which Kawagley (2006) follows to offer an Alaska Native worldview. He describes this worldview as “subsistence-based” with cultural mandates that dictate the relationships between humans and the natural and spiritual worlds (Kawagley, 2006, p. 8). The shared values identified by Elders are taught through oral traditions that provide ethical and moral teachings of Alaska Native peoples. As indicative of indigenous cultures around the world, Alaska Natives have an intimate kinship with nature. Not only does the natural world provide food, clothing, shelter, medicine, and innovative tools, the qualities and behavior of nature, when closely observed, offer spiritual and moral guidance that allow Alaska Native peoples to live in harmony with their surroundings. Kawagley (2006) states, “the creative force as manifested in nature, is more profound and powerful than anything the human being can do, because in it is the very essence of all things” (p. 10).

Kawagley (2006) then presents a Yupiaq worldview based on his personal knowledge, experiences, and perspectives of the Yupiit who according to their oral stories were “created and emerged at their present location, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta” (p. 12). Yupiaq philosophy Kawagley (2006) explains, requires an understanding of the word *ella*. Used in a variety of ways, it can refer to “weather, awareness, world, creative force or god, universe, and sky.” Kawagley (2006, n.d.)

describes a Yupiaq worldview as holotropic—moving toward wholeness. It is both ecological and spiritual. He uses a tetrahedral diagram to illustrate the interconnection and exchange of life force between the natural, human, and spiritual worlds held within the universe, or circle of life. In the Yupiaq world, “all have a spirit, therefore a consciousness and an awareness of the world around them” (Kawagley, n.d., para. 8).

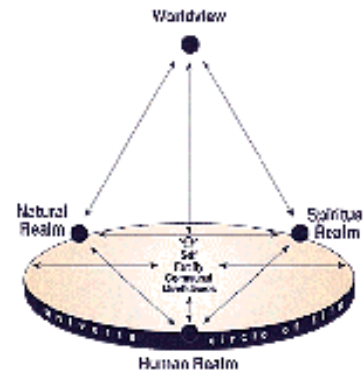


Figure 1: Kawagley's Holotropic Worldview  
Retrieved from <http://ankn.uaf.edu/>

So the wind, river, rabbit, amoeba, star, lily, and so forth all possess a spirit. The human consciousness, with its ability to merge into one with all the consciousness of this world, is the embodiment of the holotropic mind. (Kawagley, n.d., para.17) It requires that the Yupiit listen not only with their ears but to pay attention with their whole being, with all the senses. Observing and intuiting patterns and events is essential for a respectful alliance with nature, the essential element for a way of life that is in concert with natural laws and allows for survival.

A Yupiaq worldview by its very nature cannot be conceptualized. Native languages, despite being suppressed by policies and practices of cultural hegemony, allow indigenous philosophies, mythologies, and metaphors to be understood, embodied, and applied within cultural contexts that are experiential and not adequately translatable. This speaks to the resiliency of Native peoples, languages, and cultures. Indigenous scholars, past to present, have been navigating these challenging waters (Cajete, 2000; Deloria, 2006; John, 2010; Kawagley, 2006, Meyer, 2001, Drabek, 2012a). Through a Yupiaq worldview, Kawagley



(2006) moves toward unification suggesting there is an ecological and philosophical thread that brings together the interconnectedness of all things in the universe, an understanding that more recently is being corroborated by science and ancient history.

These principles imply a more metaphysical epistemology, ontology, and axiology, which are not reflected in the current western worldview but run counter to what drives the modern world. Given this discrepancy, this research explores how an ancient paradigm hidden within Greek philosophy supports not the dominant worldview, but a paradigm of wholeness as evidenced throughout indigenous cultures. This segues into a discussion of traditional knowledge and Native ways of knowing.

### **Traditional Knowledge**

Traditional knowledge spans many disciplines and is holistic and comprehensive. Each body of knowledge is specific to place and varies across time and space. Drabek (2012a) provides a glimpse into the pre-colonial knowledge base of the Kodiak Alutiit or Sugpiat—both are current ethnonyms—and into the nature and scope of traditional knowledge systems. The Alutiiq knowledge system included “communication (multi-lingual dialects, oral traditions), survival (weather predictions, outdoor survival), navigation and travel (currents, stars, tides, locations), hunting and gathering (subsistence, managed resources), medicinal expertise (plant lore, healing techniques), engineering and ingenuity (construction and tools), economics (trade, barter and concepts of wealth) and childrearing and house care (traditional practices)” (Drabek, 2012b, slide 13).

Defining traditional knowledge arises from the need to bring forward Native peoples’ vast repositories of knowledge as well as to provide safeguards against their further exploitation and erosion by western ideologies. There are numerous terms including *traditional knowledge*, *traditional ecological knowledge*, *Native science*, *indigenous knowledge systems*, *indigenous cultural and intellectual property*, etc. that have slowly been entering the mainstream dialogue. Just as there are a variety of terms in use, there are many definitions of *traditional knowledge* that have related meanings. Importantly bodies of knowledge are experienced, named, expressed, and carried differently by Indigenous

peoples and are most accurately described in the languages and cultural milieus in which they originate.

Similar to the attention given to the term *Indigenous peoples* at the international level, the Commission on Intellectual Property Rights (2002) found there is no widely accepted definition of traditional knowledge. International bodies provide guidelines that describe traditional knowledge, which are meant to raise awareness, garner political attention, and to provide instruments for its protection. In the work conducted by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) from 1998-1999, the committee summarized the concerns of traditional knowledge holders as follows:

- Concern about the loss of traditional life styles and of traditional knowledge, and the reluctance of the younger members of the communities to carry forward traditional practices.
- Concern about the lack of respect for traditional knowledge and holders of traditional knowledge.
- Concern about the misappropriation of traditional knowledge including use of traditional knowledge without any benefit sharing, or use in a derogatory manner.
- Lack of recognition of the need to preserve and promote the further use of traditional knowledge. (Commission on Intellectual Property Rights, 2002, p. 75)

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, living heritage is the foundation of cultural diversity. The Convention outlines intangible cultural heritage as “oral traditions and expressions including languages, performing arts, social practices, rituals, and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship” (UNESCO, 2003b, p. 75).

To uphold the provisions of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, cultural diversity must be protected through the safeguarding of cultural and intellectual property rights as outlined by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) (2001), the Commission on Intellectual Property Rights (CIPR)

(2002), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2003b). The Convention further defines intangible cultural heritage as that which is “transmitted from generation to generation; is constantly recreated by communities and groups, in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history; provides communities and groups with a sense of identity and continuity; is compatible with the international rights instruments; and complies with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, and of sustainable development” (UNESCO, 2003b, n.p.). UNESCO goes further setting guidelines for the Establishment of “Living Human Treasures” Systems to guarantee that culture-bearers can develop their knowledge and transmit these skills to younger generations (UNESCO, 2003a, n.p.).

Indigenous peoples, however, are growing increasingly frustrated with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). This was witnessed in 2012 when the International Indigenous Forum withdrew from the WIPO’s twentieth session of the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC). The Forum made this bold move showing their seriousness in demanding Indigenous peoples be included and their voices heard by the IGC delegations. Their solidarity put the Committee on notice that they would no longer accept being quiet bystanders but instead intended to be active participants in discussions and decisions made regarding their knowledge and resources:

As the titleholders, proprietors and ancestral owners of traditional knowledge that is inalienable, nonforfeitable and inherent to the generic resources that we have conserved and utilized in a sustainable manner within our territories,” the group feels that “the discussion on intellectual property rights and genetic resources should include Indigenous Peoples on equal terms with the States since the work will directly impact our lives, our lands, our territories and resources. (Saez, 2012, para. 4)

As a noteworthy aside, WIPO recognizes the use of the term folklore when discussing traditional knowledge has a pejorative meaning in some regions and cultures of the world.

There are countless illustrations of traditional knowledge, and next we look briefly at the interrelated areas of science and the environment, governance and natural

democracy, and medicine and healing. These themes recur later when exploring underlying similarities between ancient Greek mysticism and indigenous ways of knowing.

### **Native Science**

The expression *everything is related* runs through Alaska Native and American Indian traditions. Underwood (1990), a carrier of the traditional way of knowing called The Strong Spirit Path passed down from her Oneida ancestry, says this “is not just a charming chant, designed to put you in touch with ‘all your relations;’ it is a profound evaluation of the nature of the Universe” (n.p.). Underwood describes indigenous science as the flow of energy through the Universe. It is comparable to the particle/wave theory of western science, but there is an important distinction. Underwood explains particles are understood by location from a generally fixed reference point, but within indigenous science, everything is in constant motion, including location, which continually moves in relation to everything else.

From this holistic perspective, one event does not cause another as in western science but flows creating a cumulative effect that leads to change. “There is more a sense of evolution, a sense of cooperative evolvingness, of the Universal Reality acting through you and with you and with everything else—all at once” (Underwood, 1990, n.p.). This understanding gives significant meaning to the relatedness of all life within a singular interconnected energy field. Native science, or traditional ecological knowledge, is lived within this context. Cajete (2000) defines native science as “the outward expression of Native relationship to the natural world, a philosophical ideal conveyed through Native cosmologies, community, relationships to plants, animals, landscape, and the cosmos” (p. 82). It is a journey of learning, which Cajete calls “*coming to know*” where knowing is based on this direct and intuitive relationship with nature (p. 110).

The relationship with the natural world is both practical and spiritual. It allows Native peoples to hone their skills of observation and prediction, and to develop technologies relevant and conducive for their environments and communities. Kawagley (2006) explains:

In the distant past, they [the Yupiit] concentrated on what may be thought of as “soft” technology, whereby the making of tools and implements, construction of shelter, means of governance, conflict resolution, and so forth were done with as little harm to the natural and supernatural worlds as possible. (p. 49)

Native approaches to science and mathematics spur traditional technologies providing breadth and meaning to modern concepts of food security, organic, sustainability, renewable resources, conservation, ecology, wilderness skills, green energy, etc. Although less tangible, these technologies are also evidenced in traditional forms of governance and participatory democracy. One poignant and often dismissed example is the profound and irrefutable influence of the Haudenosaunee on the formation of the present-day democracy of the United States of America.

### **Roots of Democracy**

The Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse), the original name of a confederacy called the “Iroquois” by the French and “Six Nations” by the English, dates well before the arrival of Columbus and includes the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and later the Tuscarora. The Haudenosaunee established one of the oldest participatory democracies. There is ample evidence within oral histories and academic research of the spiritual and ecological roots of a form of governance from which the “founding fathers” borrowed to unite the thirteen colonies and draft the Constitution of the United States (Akweks, n.d.; Cohen, 1960; Grinde, Jr. & Johansen, 1991; Johansen, 1982; Johansen, 1998; Wallace, 1994).

There are many writings and teachings about the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The following synopsis comes from *The Iroquois Book of Life: White Roots of Peace* (Wallace, 1994). Before the birth of *Gayanashagowa*, the Great Binding Law, the five original tribes of the Haudenosaunee had fallen into disturbing and troubling times. Having forgotten their original instructions, they were at war with one another, marking a violent and dangerous time in their history. The Peacemaker, a messenger sent by the Creator whose real name is seldom spoken because of its sacredness, received a vision that prompted him to leave his Huron family and enter the battlegrounds of the Haudenosaunee. The five

tribes agreed to bury their weapons of war underneath the Great Tree of Peace, a white pine, in the territory of the Onondaga, the Firekeepers of the Council Fire. There the Confederacy was born. The roots of the Tree, proclaimed the Peacemaker, spread to the four cardinal directions: north, south, east, and west. The Great White Roots of Peace welcomed all who accepted the Law within its circle.

Men and women worked together to ensure the balance of the Confederacy. References to nature are embedded within the constitution, outlining a pragmatic and spiritually ecological way of governance. It is characterized by the Good Mind, having respect, generosity, love, and compassion for the natural world, which gives rise to the spiritual and political integrity, duty, and authority upon which the Confederacy was founded (Wallace, 1994). The Hiawatha wampum belt serves as a record of the union of the five nations, a precursor to the Constitution of the United States and is the flag of the Haudenosaunee today. At the time, their territory was as large as all of Europe, stretching from the Atlantic coast west to the Mississippi and from Hudson Bay south to North Carolina (Akweks, n.d.). It is uncertain, however, to what extent the Confederacy's influence extended over the region or was more centrally held.



*Figure 2: Hiawatha Wampum Belt*  
Retrieved from [www.kahnawakelonghouse.com/](http://www.kahnawakelonghouse.com/)

When the British and French arrived in Indian Territory, the well-formed league of the Haudenosaunee was known for their hospitality and kindness toward the newcomers. The Haudensaunee hoped to remain neutral in the growing tensions between England and the colonists that led to the American Revolutionary War, but as history shows, their efforts were rendered useless. In Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1744, the Onondaga chief Canassatego advised the colonial governors to form a similar union to the Confederacy by joining the colonies (Grinde, Jr. & Johansen, 1991). Holding a bundle of thirteen arrows, Canassatego demonstrated that alone the arrows are weak and can be broken, but together, they are strong and formidable (Grinde, Jr. & Johansen, 1991; Johansen, 1982).

The idea for unification was proposed in the Albany Plan of 1754 and then included in the Articles of Confederation simultaneously to and following the Declaration of Independence (1776), and was later included in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States (1789). Benjamin Franklin who sat at the council fire with the Haudenosaunee sachems (council chiefs), did not perceive their Indian neighbors as barbaric savages as portrayed throughout history, but as respected visionaries of a way of governance that embodied the ideals of freedom and liberty unlike any known English or European model of the time (Cohen, 1960; Johansen, 1982; Johansen, 1998).

Natural forms of governance are found in nations as diverse as the Haudenosaunee of the east to the Yupiit of western Alaska. For the Yupiit, “consensus was the means of decision making, and the government was egalitarian or communitarian” (Kawagley, 2006, p. 13). It was based on an “ecological mindset” (Kawagley, 2006, p. 16). These indigenous forms of governance such as those of the Haudenosaunee, Yupiit, and others adhere to a critical natural law made known through Chief Seattle of the Suquamish Indians in 1800s, a principle with which Kawagley (2006) says the Yupiit would agree; “the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth” (p. 15).

### **Ancient Medicine**

Bodies of traditional knowledge are alive and palpable within indigenous science, governance, and ancient medicine ways, and are inseparable from Native spirituality. They provide teachings and instructions for living a balanced life, which engenders health and wellbeing for the individual and community inclusive of the environment and cosmos. Difficulties arise from imbalanced relationships with the spirits of nature and the falling away from natural laws. The focus here is not on the particulars of these complex and evolved practices that are locally driven, culturally specific, and experientially distinct; instead, the primary goal is to address the challenging and ethical issues when approaching this sacred ground.

The West has been introduced to Native spirituality and medicine ways of the Plains Indians through classic writings such as *Black Elk Speaks* and *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*. Black Elk’s vision came when he was a young boy of nine years. At an urgent time when the

Lakota Nation was facing rampant erosion by the modern world, Black Elk, when incapacitated by a strange illness, was summoned by the Grandfathers:

“Your Grandfathers all over the world are having a council, and they have called you here to teach you.” His voice was very kind, but I shook all over with fear now, for I knew that these were not old men, but the Powers of the World. And the first was the Power of the West; the second, of the North; the third, of the East; the fourth, of the South; the fifth, of the Sky; the sixth, of the Earth. I knew this, and was afraid, until the first Grandfather spoke again: “Behold them yonder where the sun goes down, the thunder beings! You shall see, and have from them my power; and they shall take you to the high and lonely center of the earth that you may see; even to the place where the sun continually shines, they shall take you there to understand.” (Neihardt, 1972, p. 20)

In the 1960s, Lame Deer, also a Sioux medicine man, struck an unusual friendship with Richard Erdoes, of Jewish and Catholic heritage, whom Lame Deer chose to write his life story (Lame Deer & Erdoes, 1972). Erdoes was able to capture the essence and cadence of Lame Deer’s authentic narrative, and together they conveyed both the struggles of an Indian surviving in the white man’s world as well as medicine stories of Native spirituality. Lame Deer was known as a vision quester, going out alone into nature, fasting, praying, waiting, longing, and crying for a vision:

“Imagine a darkness so intense, and so complete that it is almost solid, flowing around you like ink, covering you like a velvet blanket. A blackness which cuts you off from the everyday world, which forces you to withdraw deep into yourself which makes you see with your heart instead of your eyes. You can’t see, but your eyes are opened. You are isolated, but you know that you are part of the Great Spirit, united with all living beings.” (Deloria, 2006, p. 20)

Black Elk and Lame Deer were renowned visionaries, medicine men or healers with the ability to see, know, and affect healing. There is, however, no accurate English translation for this relationship with the spirit world that offers the gift of vision beyond the physical dimension. These ways of knowing, being, and acting are codified and expressed uniquely within indigenous languages, rituals, and ceremonies.



Eliade in his 1964 text brings attention to the shamanic practices of the Altaic people of Mongolia and southern Siberia. “The Altaic derive their name from the fact that most historians believe that these peoples originated in the region between the Altai Mountains in the west and Lake Baikal in the northeast” (Sarangerel, 2000, p. 12). They consist of the Mongols, Tungus or Evenks, and various Turkic peoples of Siberia. It is from these Asiatic traditions that the words *shaman* and *shamanism* originate in the English vocabulary. In her lifetime, Sarangerel worked tirelessly and opened the door to the Mongolian and Siberian shamanic world educating westerners about these spiritual beliefs and clarifying misperceptions (Circle of Tengerism, n.d., Section 14). Born in the United States, she was of Siberian descent through her mother’s lineage. Although Sarangerel does not specify her tribal affiliation, in her book *Riding Windhorses*, she writes about the Siberian shamanic worldview from the perspectives of the Altaic Mongols and studied with shamans from that region as well as with a Cherokee, or Tsalagi, mentor.

The goal of the Mongol, according to the Altaic tradition, is to live a respectful life, in a state of *tegsh* (balance) (Sarangerel, 2000). “At the heart of Mongolian shamanism are three essential ideas: the maintenance of balance in the world, reverence for the earth and living things and personal responsibility” (Sarangerel, 2000, p. 14). According to Mongol philosophy, ultimately, the individual is responsible in life, and personal power is achieved by balancing strengths with the acceptance of one’s flaws with no expectation of the false ideal of perfection (Sarangerel, 2000). Sarangerel emphasizes that nobody, not even a shaman, comes between one’s relationship with *Tenger* (Father Heaven). “*Tenger* is the chief deity, the creator and source of all other spirits, and provider of energy to living things through the crown of the head” (Sarangerel, 2000, p. 192). Although Sarangerel speaks of shamanism, she is actually referring to what she calls Tengerism. The added “ism” to Tenger is the Anglicization of the word.

*Shaman* is of Tungusic origin, part of the Altaic language family of eastern Siberia (Eliade, 1964). More accurately, the word comes from the Evenki language, as Tungus was the name given the Evenks by the Russians. In an effort to preserve Mongolian and Siberian traditions, a Buryat-Mongol source provides insight about this history:

When the Russians started conquering and colonizing Siberia, they first came upon shamans among the people. (The Russians called the Evenk “Tungus”). The Evenks, and their neighbors, the Buryats, use the term “shaman” for their spiritual leaders. The word spread from the Russians to the Americas via anthropologists who were studying Native Americans. These anthropologists needed a word to describe what they *thought* the Native Americans were doing and did not understand the very different world views that the peoples had. It is a shame that native peoples were not given a chance to define their own spiritual beliefs and had outsiders label them in generic, condescending, and destructive ways. They never bothered to ask the Native Americans what *their* words for *their* beliefs were. (Circle of Tengerism, n.d., Section 3, part 1)

The root meaning of *shaman* is debated within academic circles. The word in Evenki for spiritual leader is *shaman* not *saman* as some sources indicate. “This is due to a transcription error made by anthropologists who did not distinguish between ‘s’ and ‘sh’” (Circle of Tengerism, n.d., Section 3, part 7). According to an on-line etymology dictionary, *shaman* may also derive from languages such as “Chinese *sha men* (Buddhist monk), Prakrit *saymay* –and Sanskrit *sramana-s* (Buddhist ascetic)” (Harper, 2014, n.p.). Ethnolinguists and scholars continue to argue the merit of its root meaning in other languages, as there is no consensus. The ambiguity of its origins only makes apparent what is most certain. There are countless indigenous expressions for what the West unilaterally and disparagingly identifies as a *shaman* and *shamanism* across indigenous groups.

Another misconception is that the shamans of Mongolia and Siberia practice shamanism. This is not accurate as they are practitioners within a broader cosmological paradigm now referred to as Tengerism (Circle of Tengerism, n.d., Section 1).

Tengerism means a reverence for the spirits while “Shamanism” seems to mean reverence toward shamans. Shamans are not to be worshiped but merely respected as priests of Tengerism. Calling our beliefs “Shamansim” would be like calling Christianity “Priestism” or Judaism “Rabbiism.” (Circle of Tengerism, n.d., Section 1)

In summary, *shamanism* originated as a western construct for the beliefs, practices, and rituals of the Evenk shamans observed and interpreted by the outside world. The West now applies this word generically to the diverse healing and spiritual traditions found not only in Asia, but the circumpolar North, the Americas, Europe, and Africa linking back to the Paleolithic era. Erroneous stereotyping places nature-based cultures within one broad category for which there is no definitive and exhaustive indigenous term. Historians also tend to describe *shamanism* as an indigenous religion. Sarangerel (2000) speaks to this inaccuracy explaining that Tengerism is not governed by doctrine or organization but instead is cultivated through a highly personal relationship with the spirit world.

The discussion of anything shamanic, then, is problematic, controversial, and carries a history of friction and trauma. There are fundamental differences between Native languages and English that make the translation of such culturally based phenomena difficult at best. For example, Native languages are verb-oriented unlike English that is noun-based and that creates categories and labels (Underwood, 1990). The Anglicization of *shamanism* has concretized and made dogmatic what is organic, fluid, and ineffable. In addition to the issues of translation, indigenous spiritual traditions have been demonized by Christianity, dismissed by the medical establishment, replaced by decontextualized book learning, romanticized by modern-day spiritualists, and appropriated by profiteers. The following story about a group of Lakota medicine men tasked with deciding what to call themselves adds levity and profundity to this deep-seated predicament.

In *The Price of a Gift*, Joe Eagle Elk shares his life story as a Lakota medicine man (Mohatt & Eagle Elk, 2000). He recounts a meeting with a small group of colleagues on the Rosebud Reservation where they discussed how to present and refer to themselves in their work. They considered different terms in Lakota that might encompass the scope of their skills and knowledge. They agreed upon *wapiya wićasa*, meaning “the man who fixes.” It was both appropriate and humorous to call themselves “fixer-uppers” (Mohatt & Eagle Elk, 2000, p. 14). They also decided to keep the English title *medicine man*, although they felt *healer* was more accurate. The change was not made, however, because “they thought the English was a bit arrogant and it implied that they did the healing rather than the spirits” (Mohatt & Eagle Elk, 2000, pp. 14-15). Their careful consideration of the terminology along

with a sense of humor reveals a humble view of themselves as “good tools in the process of healing” for which they ascribed no personal credit or recognition (p. 15).

Medicine man/woman, like the word *shaman*, is a broad label that does not do justice to the specific roles these people play within their communities. In the indigenous world, the spirits choose these specialists: the spiritual leaders, storytellers, ceremonialists, herbalists, counselors, physicians, etc. To fulfill their roles, they are gifted with bringing forth information and healing from the spirit dimension to the physical world. To place all these practitioners under one heading negates their respective skills and knowledge as well as the complexity of their advanced healing systems. In his last book, *The World We Used to Live In*, Deloria (2006) recounts ancestral stories and incidents of such spiritual humility, prowess, and strength:

Our ancestors invoked the assistance of higher spiritual entities to solve pressing practical problems, such as finding game, making predictions of the future, learning about medicines, participating in healings, conversing with other creatures, finding lost objects, and changing the course of physical events through a relationship with the higher spirits who controlled the winds, the clouds, the mountains, the thunders, and other phenomena of the natural world. (p. xix)

In Kawagley’s writings, he refers to the shamans of the Yupiaq culture. He reveals how a Yupiaq metaphysical worldview has been woven into their advanced ecological and spiritual approaches to science, education, survival, governance, healing, and wellness since time immemorial.

There were members of the Yupiaq community that transcended all human levels of knowledge. These were the shamans, the dreamers, and others who were receptive to nature's voices and intuitively deciphered a message which was passed on by myth, taboo, ritual, ceremony or other forms of extraordinary happening. The shamans were gifted to travel freely in the unseen world, and they often would return with new songs, taboos, rituals or ceremonies to teach. (Kawagley, 1999, n.p.)

Native spirituality and medicine shared through indigenous voices help bring clarity to what the West misunderstands. Meanwhile, the discourse and debate about shamanism

continues amongst scholars. It is helpful, therefore, to be cognizant of these issues while learning from Indigenous peoples—as they deem appropriate.

There are two primary schools of thought regarding the study of shamanism among researchers (Walter & Fridman, 2004). One is critical of the broad view and limits it to the features and worldviews found within the Mongolian and Siberian landscape. This places the term back in the context in which the English word first derived. Also, Sarangerel (2000) contends that “in spite of some linguistic differences, there are overarching themes and images that appear among all forms of shamanism in Siberia.” As noted earlier, however, Tengerism is the preferred term, and there are serious implications to privileging the western construct of shamanism over the indigenous. Kehoe (2000) is particularly critical of the broad view considering it an oversimplified approach to shamanic study that is misused when applied outside of Siberia. She calls for a serious review of the anthropological term.

The other trend in the literature is to advance the broad application of shamanism across cultures throughout the world since the dawn of man. Despite criticism of this approach, Vitebsky (1995) emphasized, “shamanic motifs, themes and characters appear throughout human history, religion and psychology” (p. 6). Sarangerel’s suggestion to compare the shamanic ideas of Siberia with that of American Indians moves toward this possibility from an indigenous perspective. According to an encyclopedic work that presents these different trends, it concludes that “*shamanism* has been created and developed as a heuristic term in the West, which helps researchers to identify phenomena that are linked by a complicated network of similarities and common qualities” (Walter & Fridman, 2004, p. XXI).

This discussion has now come full circle. Indicative of an indigenous worldview, divergent perspectives held in balance make complete what one cannot do alone. Meyer (2008), references “a spiritual principle within ancient streams of knowing where specificity leads to universality” found within Native Hawaiian epistemology (p. 217). Underwood (1990) adheres to her Oneida shamanic training where the broad vision of hawk leads to the detailed focus of the mouse. These perspectives are not mutually exclusive; they circle one another, each giving rise to the other. Applied to this discussion,

it implies there can be a culturally and linguistically distinct phenomenon with multitudes of manifestations that has an overarching quality of inseparableness and universality. In English, however, there is no name available that is not laden with misrepresentation; yet there are countless expressions found within indigenous languages. As Meyer (2008) cautiously suggests, we are “edging toward a universal epistemology” (p.221). More boldly, if there is a pan-cultural way of knowing, it must also exist in the West, deeply buried within its scientific and materialistic worldview.

### **Native Ways of Knowing**

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that refers to the meaning and acquisition of knowledge; it is concerned with how we know what we know. The previous section introduced the term *traditional knowledge* and the international instruments that seek to define and protect it and looked at ancient streams of knowledge related to science, governance, and medicine. This vast knowledge base is being applied to the field of Alaska Native education, which is continually gaining attention due to the initial collaborative efforts of the late Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley and Ray Barnhardt. Together, they worked tirelessly to bring Alaska Native knowledge into all levels of the educational system. The Alaska Native Knowledge Network (ANKN) is a clearinghouse for publications and resources, promoting indigenous knowledge and curricula. ANKN seeks to provide materials that “reach beyond the surface features of Indigenous cultural practices and illustrate the potential for comparative study of deep knowledge drawn from both the Native and Western streams” (Barnhardt, 2005, n.p.).

The same analogy applies to the acquisition of traditional knowledge representing varying ways and depths from which knowledge is retrieved. Traditionally, knowledge is carried and transmitted through Elders, parents and family, and community members. Knowledge is passed on generationally through oral traditions, observation, and direct experience. Competency is measured by the ability to apply the knowledge needed not just for survival but also for thriving and being a good human being. The most salient feature indicative of indigenous epistemologies is the link between the metaphysical and physical worlds. We turn now to the work of three current indigenous scholars who reveal the

complexity, intricacy, and depth of their respective Alaska Native and Hawaiian epistemologies (Drabek, 2012a; John, 2010; Meyer, 2001, 2008, 2011).

Theresa Arevgaq John (2010) begins her dissertation, *Yuraryararput Kangiit-Llu: Our Ways of Dance and their Meanings*, as is customary, by introducing herself. John grew up speaking Yugtun in the village of *Negtemiut* (Nightmute), on *Qaluyatt*, (Nelson Island), close to the Bering Sea. She is of the Yupiit, meaning the “real” or “genuine” people. This is not just an ethnic term; importantly, according to Yup’ik tradition, it is an ethical concept of humanness. Her first memory, when she says she became aware, is of dancing when three years old (John, 2010, p. 12). Mentored by her paternal grandmother, she learned the traditional dances passed down by her grandparents. She credits her grandparents, shamans, and local experts with transmitting to her the knowledge she now carries forward as a fluent Yugtun speaker and professional dance scholar (John, 2010, p. 5). The ritual and ceremony of dance and music is a way of connecting across time and space to a complex web of existence. Deeply rooted in her traditional culture, John builds on the work of her predecessor, Dr. Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley, focusing on the ways and meanings of Yup’ik dance. She approaches her research with an authentic reverence, translating for the Yupiit and a wider audience, a Yup’ik ontology, epistemology, and worldview that have always been.

John (2010) describes the breadth and scope of Yup’ik epistemology through the *Ellarpak*, (the big world) which consists of *Ellam Yua* (the creator), the human and non-human world, and the universe (p. 13). Two overlapping symbols illustrate John’s epistemological model; one is the Yup’ik *ellam iinga* (the eye of the universe or awareness), and the other is the shaman’s drum showing the upper, middle, and lower worlds. Together, the circular and multidimensional *Ellarpak* symbols represent the pathways between the different realms and provide the blueprint for a unified and sacred existence (John, 2010, pp. 17-20). Historically, traditional knowledge has been transmitted orally and contains the lessons, morals, and metaphors that guide the Yupiit throughout life (John, 2010, p. 24).

*Ellam Yua* (the creator) co-exists within all of creation and constitutes the reality of absolute connectedness (John, 2010, p. 22). According to a Yupiaq/ Yup’ik worldview, as

explained by both Kawagley and John, all elements of life are imbued with spirits, awareness, and consciousness. *Angalkuut*, (shamans) were a select group who had the ability and skills to navigate the fluid and multidimensional layers of existence and to communicate with the non-human spirit world, which John (2010) refers to as the “highest psychological developmental processes” (p. 23). Shamans were mediators who negotiated with the spirit world, through the use of masks, drums, and music, on behalf of humans and non-humans for healing, good weather, food security, and conflict resolution (John, 2010, pp. 26-27).

“Ella mamkitellrani (when the earth was thin) refers to a period of time when all of the human and non-human inhabitants were able to communicate and interact with one another” (John, 2010, p. 24). During this time, all life forms could merge and thereby know each other, even transform into one another. John (2010) explains, “Songs were the only communication tools of the human and non-human inhabitants prior to the development of their socio-linguistic skills” (p. 24). According to John, at this time, all of life possessed these higher psychological processes.

John’s (2010) in-depth delineation of Yup’ik epistemology described through Yugtun terminology leads to reflection and inquiry about the possible implications. First, Yup’ik shamans possess similar advanced abilities characteristic of the inhabitants of *ella mamkitellrani*. In Yup’ik culture, then, shamans are the embodied archetype of an epistemological way of knowing that emanates from this time “when the earth was thin.” They not only have valuable skills that serve the community, but they are a reminder of a time when all the human and non-human inhabitants communed and conveyed knowledge through reciprocal, energetic, and spiritual processes. If at one time all of the world’s inhabitants interacted in this way, this implies a universal epistemology where knowledge resides in a spiritual and metaphysical dimension that is brought forth through processes that are latent but seeded within all of life. Cultures convey this universal principle through their specific creation stories, mythologies, philosophies, and worldviews. Through their languages, rituals, and ceremonies, Native peoples are most connected to these ancient ways of knowing, despite the West’s lost-ness, which has gravely impacted the indigenous world.



Drabek (2012a) in her dissertation *Litukut Sugpiat'stun (We are learning how to be real people): Exploring Kodiak Alutiiq Literature Through Core Values* presents the rich meanings of stories and literature within the context of epistemology. Drabek is most influenced by her Alutiiq heritage but has a rich ethnic background of diverse Native and European ancestry. Drabek (2012a) presents the Alutiiq cosmology before Russian influence and subsequent European colonization. She approaches the subject with much sensitivity as this inquiry contains shamanic themes, symbols, motifs, and archetypes that may cause discomfort and fear largely due to the Alutiiq transition to Christianity (Drabek, 2012a, pp. 123-124). She encourages finding ways to discuss and reveal this history that help heal what has been traumatized.

Drabek (2012a) describes the Kodiak Alutiiq, or Sugpiaq, people as “thriving through a rich traditional harvest lifestyle” (p. 124). As hunting was their primary means for food security, they had complex rituals and ceremonies that ensued proper etiquette, respect, and balance with the spirits of those upon which their livelihood depended.

As recent as this past century, Alutiiq Elders recall witnessing ritualized preparations and the regular passage of traditional stories, which describe the practices and beliefs about how people should properly interact with their environment to ensure survival and maintain balance between the natural and supernatural worlds. (Drabek, 2012a, p. 124)

A reoccurring theme within indigenous epistemologies is the inseparability between spirit and matter. The Alutiiq cosmology comprises an extensive universe of deities, supernatural beings, and worlds, some of which Drabek (2012a) lists in both Alutiiq and English. *Llam Sua* is the personification of the supreme deity, the Weather God or Universe's Spirit represented as a face within the inner most circle of concentric worlds rippling outward (Drabek, 2012a, p. 125). Alutiiq dwellings and ceremonial houses were round, symbolizing while actively engaging these complex principles and forces of the universe.

Drabek (2012a) explains that within Alutiiq cosmology, there are good and bad spirits, and the shaman helped to protect against the monovalent forces. According to Drabek's research, *kalla'lek* (shaman) and *ar'ursulek* (whale shaman), those who used their shamanic skills specifically for whale hunting, could “spirit travel” between worlds to bring

about health and successful hunting (p. 129). The Alutiiq/Sugpiaq language, or Sugt'stun, and oral traditions emphasize the distinction between the human and the supernatural. When these worlds merge, everything turns inside out and confuses the mind like a cosmological riddle that reveals that nothing is truly as it seems.

Spirits could transform to appear like people or when people traveled to the spirit world the animals or supernatural beings could appear to be easily confused as real humans. The same is true within traditional Alutiiq stories where the characters are referred to as people but often in fact are supernatural beings or animals themselves. In this way, western audiences can understand the characters' behaviors as on par with other characters or archetypes, as found in Greek, Roman, Norse, Celtic or Hebrew mythologies. (Drabek, 2012a, p. 129)

Shamans were both revered and feared in Alutiiq culture because they could use their powers and skills to help and heal or to wreak havoc and terrorize.

While some Alutiiq became shamans through their own personal journey or illness, other people were identified at birth as it was considered by some families to be a hereditary role. Drabek (2012a) indicates that because the shamans and their families held power, how shamans were chosen may have been a factor in their eventual demise. Drabek notes the traditional shamanic beliefs disappeared with the arrival of the Russian explorers on Kodiak Island. The shamans were ineffective against the diseases brought by the explorers, illnesses that only foreign medicines seemed able to treat. The people began to mistrust the shamans while simultaneously the shamans became angry and bitter further contributing to their vulnerability and downfall. These circumstances were exacerbated by the conversion to Christianity and the systematic colonial oppression of their traditional spirituality.

This is just a brief glimpse into Drabek's work in which she further describes Alutiiq cosmological themes and cultural values as they appear in their stories and literature. With depth, rigor, and care, Drabek (2012a) unravels a shamanic epistemology of the Alutiiq illustrating what indigenous scholars offer to their peoples, communities, and the world and also to the spiritual and multilayered dimensions of existence. As indigenous cultures reclaim their stories and make sense of them for the present, the West can contribute by

providing space for their telling and by listening. This is but one step needed for healing and reconciliation that ignites the awareness of the West, reminding us of our natural and original epistemological principles and worldview.

Manulani Aluli Meyer (2001, 2008, 2011) describes a Hawaiian epistemology based on a holographic triangulation of mind, body, and spirit. Meyer (2001) stresses that Hawaiians perceive and sense the world differently than their western colonizers and that it is an amazement that they have survived within an educational system that promotes a worldview so foreign to their values, culture, and epistemology. She began this work in 1998 when interviewing Hawaiian educational leaders on the islands of Hawai'i and O'ahu about ways they experience their "ocean of knowing" (Meyer, 2001, p. 126). From these interviews, Meyer (2001, 2008) describes seven emergent epistemological themes: Spirituality and Knowing, That Which Feeds, The Cultural Nature of the Senses, Relationship and Knowledge, Unity and Knowledge, Words and Knowledge, and The Body-Mind Question.

The first theme, *Spirituality and Knowledge*, refers to the cultural contexts of knowledge. It was the topic that received the most attention by the interviewees. "Inevitably, every mentor spoke of and lingered in this area of how knowledge is affected, drawn from, and shaped by spiritual forces" (Meyer, 2001, p. 127). The second theme, *That Which Feeds*, refers to physical place and knowing. *Aina* means land and is experienced as origin, mother, and inspiration. Here, Meyer (2001) uses it to refer to the environment. "It was the place of birth (aina hanau) where all mentors began their descriptions of who they were, and how it shaped their differences and values" (Meyer, 2001, p. 128). Culture is experienced through the land by observing, listening, and giving thanks. The third theme, *Cultural Nature of the Senses*, refers to the expanding notions of empiricism. Hawaiians actively engage with their environment through the five physical senses embedded within a larger spiritual phenomenon. For example, "to pay attention, to really listen (ho'olono) is to invoke a spirit, a deity. The fourth theme, *Relationship and Knowledge*, refers to notions of self through other. Relationships and interdependence are key components of Hawaiian epistemology and "offer opportunities to practice reciprocity, exhibit balance, develop harmony with land, and generosity with others" (Meyer, 2001, p. 134). The focus is on the

other and knowing oneself through another. One mentor, for example, equated knowing something with being able to feed his family. The fifth theme, *Utility and Knowledge*, refers to ideas of wealth and usefulness. Knowledge has a purpose and function; otherwise it is only information. Function of knowledge is “shaped by morality, by history, by genealogy, and by one’s belief in continuity” (Meyer, 2001, p. 137). It is what is passed on and handed down generationally. The sixth theme, *Words and Knowledge*, refers to causality in language. Words have power and cause events to happen. As children, Hawaiians are taught not only the cultural nuances of expressions but of the weight and timing of their words. According to one mentor, “Knowledge is knowing when to share and with whom to share (Meyer, 2001, 139). The seventh theme, *The Body-Mind Question*, refers to the illusion of separation. Within a Hawaiian worldview, mind and body are one. “Intelligence is found in the core of our body system—in our viscera, the *na’au* (Meyer, 2001, p. 141). Through their stories, the mentors described intelligence as a feeling of comfortableness that constitutes knowing.

Meyer (2008, 2011) later expands on these epistemological themes and their implications for research. Although specific to the Hawaiian Islands, each epistemological theme presented above, Meyer (2008) suggests, correlates to a universal truth that she asks readers to consider:

1. Finding knowledge that endures is a *spiritual* act that animates and educates.
2. We *are* earth, and our awareness of how to exist with it extends from this idea.
3. *Our senses are culturally shaped*, offering us distinct pathways to reality.
4. Knowing something is bound to how we develop a *relationship* with it.
5. *Function* is vital with regard to knowing something.
6. *Intention* shapes our language and *creates our reality*.
7. Knowing is *embodied* and in union with cognition. (p. 223-224)

Meyer (2008, 2011) then incorporates these truths in a holographic epistemology based on the triangulation of body, mind, and spirit found within many traditions and philosophies and which Hawaiians refer to as *manaio*, *manaolana*, and *aloha*. It is here that Meyer encourages and challenges us to make practical a universal epistemology grounded in

cultural philosophies found throughout the world, where research engenders holism and authenticity. This holistic approach offers new methodologies for use within the academy.

## **Conclusion**

This literature review presents four overarching themes within the field of indigenous studies relevant to this research study: indigenism, worldviews, traditional knowledge, and Native ways of knowing. The increasing number of indigenous scholars is slowly changing the climate of the academy. Their work and perspectives challenge the dominant paradigm that favors an objectified, scientific approach and separates spirit from matter. Instead, they are putting forward in great detail, depth, and complexity worldviews that flow from epistemologies grounded in Native languages, lands, and traditions. Indigenous peoples have shown resiliency, adaptability, and strength in the midst of rapid culture change and western policies of extinction, assimilation, and globalization. Despite these overwhelmingly adverse forces, Native peoples are emerging again, particularly within the academy, using the very system that sought to “kill the Indian and save the man” to assert their identity and to preserve the spirit of knowledge. In the process, they are unsettling entrenched and exclusionary western approaches to research and are advancing indigenous frameworks and methodologies most relevant today.

This research asserts the West is at a critical turning point. The West can no longer separate the spiritual from the physical nature of existence in our lives, societies, and systems. Historically, westerns have researched Indigenous peoples and cultures from such dualistic frameworks. This research contends the West need learn from and with Native peoples and what they have to varying degrees safeguarded throughout time; it proposes rekindling the spirit of an ancient western worldview. Indigenous methodologies and methods, the subject of the next chapter, provide pathways for the West to remember this Original Knowledge. It invites us to now follow the indigenous lead.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### Overview

The premise of this research methodology is that knowledge is alive, imbued with spirit and evident within natural patterns, symbols, and ancient stories. Western science primarily derives information from facts and data alone, and because it distances itself from the spiritual, it inadvertently separates from the wholeness of knowledge. Indigenous methodologies provide research philosophies, theories, and methods not only relevant but crucial for today. Four particular indigenous researchers through the use of Native worldviews, epistemologies, and histories shape this methodology (Brayboy, 2006; Meyer, 2001, 2008, 2011; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2001, 2008). Each author brings authenticity and accountability through these new approaches to doing research. Combined, their work provides new theories rooted in indigenous philosophies and values that help navigate this inquiry. This chapter examines those theories, which include decolonizing methodologies, tribal critical race theory, holographic epistemology, and research as ceremony.

Although this project began with a pilot study where I convened *The Alaska Native Dialogue on Healing and Wellness*, summarized in the introductory chapter, I am not working with a particular community. The community of interest is western society and all those it affects and influences through its dualistic worldview. This may seem an inflated view of the scope of this research, however, it does endeavor to be accountable to the whole. Through exploring the wounding of the dominant paradigm through an applied indigenous-based methodology, this research moves toward the synthesis of indigenous and western knowledge systems.

Mindful inquiry is a social science method that emphasizes the researcher's connectedness with the research (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Similarly, indigenous methods stress the importance of the researcher's story and his/her relatedness to how the research is conceived, cultivated, and shared. Indigenous methodologies and mindful inquiry both include the spiritual as integral to the research design. Such philosophies run counter to scientific methods of positivistic and empirical standards for research, and it is critical to

note that indigenous knowledge systems have their own inherent quality of empiricism. This is not a debate about objectivism vs. subjectivism, as both alone are too narrow to describe a methodology based on holism. This research posits that we are valuable instruments of our inquiry, through mind, body, and spirit. Combined decolonizing research practices, tribal critical race theory, holographic epistemology, research as ceremony, and mindful inquiry provide means for deconstructing the current western worldview and revealing the urgent need for and the implications of this unraveling.

### **Decolonizing Methodologies**

In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith's (1999) sharp tone makes clear the damaging impact research has had historically on Indigenous peoples. The following declarations in her introduction demand our attention:

From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity. (Smith, 1999, p. 1)

Research through its imperialist lens has broken cultural protocols, erroneously interpreted and assigned meaning to Original Peoples and their life ways, and allowed researchers and intellectuals to claim authority over indigenous knowledge. Most dangerously, Smith cautions, research based in western ideology influences every aspect of indigenous life. Smith (1999) states that "it [research] told us things already known, suggested things that would not work, and made careers for people who already had jobs" (p. 3). Decolonizing methodologies is an ethical approach to research that places indigenous knowledge, values, and practices at the center of the design.

Smith (1999) addresses the emotional volatility of linking research with an imperial/colonial mandate and educates about this history through a Maori perspective deeply rooted in a sense of place. European imperialism was a drive for economic expansion that thrived on the subjugation of "others" through "'discovery,' conquest, exploitation, distribution and appropriation" to achieve that gain (Smith, 1999, p. 21). It

was an ideology heralded as knowledge and substantiated through economics, the sciences, and political policies. No matter how insidious, imperialism conveyed a sense of entitlement and enlightenment that justified its actions for the betterment of humankind.

Imperialism was the system of control which secured the markets and capital investment. Colonialism facilitated this expansion by ensuring that there was European control, which necessarily meant securing and subjugating the indigenous peoples. (Smith, 1999, p. 21)

To desensitize the western mind to its actions, imperialist ideology systematically made Native peoples and their cultures appear less advanced and inhuman. To preserve their identity and power, the colonizers had to believe their history to be accurate and moral. This is discussed more fully in Chapter 7, which addresses this condition as a disease of the psyche. Smith's provocative work sets the stage by exposing research as an instrument of imperial/colonial ideology that is not of the past but is shaped into the culture of today. Her writing is an appeal to our humanity and a call for real reform.

*Decolonizing Methodologies* presents a perspective that can no longer be silenced. Personally, it exposes and explains the tension and discomfort I have felt and experienced within western systems but could not articulate because of my own cultural and academic conditioning. When I returned to Nepal to conduct research on indigenous psychologies and traditional ways of healing with the Tharus of the southern *terai*, I followed cultural protocols, worked with local translators and guides, and was welcomed by the community (Rahm, 1995). My respect for their practices was evident but what was not were the assumptions I made that were unconsciously wedded to my worldview. While the Tharu people seemed happy, even excited, to share their medicine ways, they had no context for or concept of research within the academic world. My accountability was not to the community but to western standards of research practice.

The tension became most noticeable when while writing the thesis I needed to compare the Tharu conceptualization of psychopathology to disorders found within the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). I could not understand the need to make the *DSM* the authority trying to fit the Tharu phenomenology of psychopathology into its categories and definitions. The *DSM* groups symptoms of behavior



and labels them as specific syndromes of mental illness. The syndromes are characterized by distinct manifestations of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. A certain number of symptoms must be present for the clinician to make a diagnosis. Additionally, the clinician considers issues of duration and the causes of the condition. For example, syndromes in the *DSM* specify how long symptoms are present and indicate whether they are due to physical causes or are substance-induced.

At the time, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* had begun including a section on culture-bound syndromes to address disorders that are unique to specific peoples and cultural settings. These phenomena may present as quasi syndromes in the medical sense, but they do not match those found in the *DSM* (Hughes, Simons, & Wintrob, 1992). The thesis concluded that the Tharu conceptualization and experience of mental illness is a culture-bound “syndrome” where the symptomology, etiology, and phenomenology is addressed by a network of local practitioners within a traditional and spiritual system of healing that focuses on the meaning behind the imbalance (Rahm, 1995). Despite this caveat to the *DSM* (the addition of culture-bound syndromes), this experience exposed a fundamental issue endemic to research: the assumption that western standards and practices are the authoritative measure for knowing “others.” My research work in Nepal triggered this discomfort that I have been coming to understand and which has galvanized my interest in deconstructing and shifting the western paradigm and worldview in relationship to healing and wellness with Indigenous peoples.

When convening the *Alaska Native Dialogue on Healing and Wellness*, I felt hesitant despite the favorable response from participants. I struggled with approaching the dialogue as research. The dialogue served another purpose though, which was to push me in a different direction, inquiring into the wounding of the western worldview. In my academic career, I have used community-based participatory research as well as interview and dialogue methods with indigenous groups. Although these methods can serve useful purposes and be used respectfully with communities, I choose an applied approach rooted in the very philosophies, principles, and phenomena I am studying. Smith (1999) states, “In a decolonizing framework, deconstruction is part of a much larger intent” (p. 3). This is true of this project whose broader goal is to rekindle an ancient spirit of the West through

deconstructing and indigenizing the current western worldview. Smith's work sets precedence for a methodology that unearths the imperial and colonial roots of western research and knowledge, and exposes the frustration of working within these frameworks and paradigms that still often harm, offend, and dismiss the indigenous world.

### **Tribal Critical Race Theory**

Brayboy's (2006) tribal critical race theory (TribalCrit) provides a needed emphasis in research methodology that previously has not existed. Critical race theory grew out of critical law theory and asserts that racism is entrenched within society and is so deeply embedded in the fabric of the "mainstream" that it is often unnoticed and unconsciously accepted as the *modus operandi*. "In contrast, the basic tenet of TribalCrit emphasizes that colonization (not racism) is endemic to society (Brayboy, 2006, p. 429). Brayboy outlines eight other tenets of TribalCrit, where the deconstruction of colonial frameworks is central to all its components.

Brayboy (2006) defines colonization as "European American thought, knowledge, and power structures [that] dominate present-day society in the United States" (p. 430). The process of colonization has been so thorough and ingrained that both the dominant society and some Native peoples fail to recognize colonial thought and behavior unconsciously expressed through the greater national/global body. The dominant society now barely recognizes the peoples and cultures it has systematically eroded and denied, and the process is most complete, Brayboy (2006) contends, when Native peoples accept colonial ideas at the expense of their own cultural identity and expression (p. 431).

The central thesis that colonization is endemic to society leads to the second tenet of tribal critical race theory. "U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and the desire for material gain" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 429). At the root of these contentious issues is land. The European concept of land ownership as property is distinctly different from Indigenous peoples' relationship with the Earth. Through its earliest policies propagated through a Christian ideology and Eurocentric educational, scientific, and material emphasis, the United States justified the taking of Native lands and declared it in the best interest of the "Indian." Brayboy explains, "in this

context White supremacy refers to the idea that the established European or western way of doing things has both moral and intellectual superiority over those things non-western” (p. 432). These critical issues are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. Here though, Brayboy makes clear that these practices and policies serve the colonial interests of the United States, not of Indigenous peoples.

The third tenet of tribal critical race theory states, “Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 429). The emphasis here is that within the United States, American Indians are a racialized group while ignored as political and legal entities. In fact, Native peoples have a unique relationship with the federal government, of which the larger society is generally unaware.

Fourth, “Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 429). Tribal autonomy is “the ability for communities and tribal nations to have control over existing land bases, resources, and tribal national boundaries” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 433). It is the condition that allows tribal nations to be recognized and treated on a nation-to-nation basis by the United States and other nations. Self-determination means “rejecting the guardian/ward relationship between the U.S. and tribal nations” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 433). Self-identification refers to the ability for tribes and peoples to define themselves on their own terms. Autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification are requisite conditions of tribal sovereignty.

The fifth component of tribal critical race theory states, “the concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 429). Culture is fluid, changing, and closely linked with land and ancestral ties to a physical place. Brayboy (2006) identifies three forms of knowledge: cultural knowledge, knowledge of survival, and academic knowledge (p. 435). While cultural knowledge is specific and varies across groups, tribes, and nations, knowledge of survival is the “ability and willingness to change, adapt, and adjust in order to move forward as an individual and community” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 435). Academic knowledge is the product of western learning and schooling and generally antithetical to indigenous

ways of knowing, although they may overlap in some areas. The notion of power is complex, and within many indigenous cultures, it does not connote control as in the West. Instead, power is “an expression of sovereignty” and is “the capacity to adapt to changing landscapes, times, ideas, circumstances, and situations” (Brayboy, 2006, 436). It is associated with survival and perseverance particularly within hostile environments. Brayboy (2006) concludes that culture is the basis for knowledge and leads to power, which more broadly is a universal energetic force circulating within and without individuals and groups.

The sixth tenet recognizes that “governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 429). The goal of “Indian education” has been assimilation rather than the furtherance of tribal identity and culture. Although there is a movement toward cultivating and maintaining cultural integrity in the western educational setting, the practices and policies of assimilation are systemic and continue to supplant indigenous ways of knowing with academic knowledge.

The seventh component of tribal critical race theory emphasizes “the importance of tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future; it honors the adaptability of groups and recognizes the differences within individuals and between people and groups” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 437). This leads to new theoretical frameworks that call into question western values and power structures diametrically opposed to indigenous traditions and practices.

The eighth tenet challenges western exclusive assumptions of scientifically based research. “Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 430). Stories are the theories of Native peoples that provide meaning and knowledge of the world. In an indigenous context, you absorb the message of the story when “you tell them, hear them, and feel them” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 440).

Lastly, “theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 430). This is Brayboy’s call to action and activism, for research to move away from abstractness and irrelevancy. By

combining research with practice, Brayboy (2006) contends tribal critical race theory ultimately becomes praxis, “moving away from colonization and assimilation and towards a more real self-determination and tribal sovereignty” (p. 441).

Smith (1999) and Brayboy (2006) bring critical perspectives that situate the process of colonization and an imperialist and colonial ideology embedded and often unconscious within the dominant society as the driving force of research that furthers the national interests through material gain, wealth, and power at the expense of Indigenous peoples and the world’s resources. The educational system typically does not expose students to this history nor give them the opportunity to critically reflect on the effects of colonization of these lands of North America that now comprise the United States of America. These researchers are just two in a growing number of indigenous scholars who bring voice to what the western worldview has typically silenced. What hangs in the balance is the humanizing of our research inquiries and the methodologies we choose to affect social change that privilege not any one but the whole. Meyer (2001, 2008, 2011), through discussions with Hawaiian Elders and mentors, moves toward a universal research approach based not only on Hawaiian epistemology, ontology, and axiology but that bridges traditions and teachings found throughout the world.

### **Holographic Epistemology**

Meyer (2008) challenges researchers to develop “new theories from ancient agency” (p. 217). To address the issues and conditions of today, we need to move beyond current research paradigms into a deeper dimensional space that science has avoided. The need to include the spiritual is a difficult proposition for the western scientific worldview, but it is what Meyer (2011) calls for in her research on the holographic triangulation of meaning: body, mind, and spirit.

Can the idea, then, of duality combine itself into wholeness needed for this time?

Dual to nondual, research to renewal, fragment to whole—yes this is the goal.

(Meyer, 2008, p. 217)

Meyer advocates for empiricism where knowledge is shaped by indigenous epistemologies, safeguarded within ancestral memory, malleable to a changing world, and applicable to the

times. The difficulty is in trying to conceptualize the non-conceptual, to include what has always been all inclusive, yet we must try to give form to the formless, for this is the very nature of the Universe we seek to know. Meyer (2011) like Kawagley (2006, n.d.) is a pioneer of a holographic approach to knowledge based on the inseparable whole, principles found within Indigenous epistemologies and worldviews and corroborated through quantum theory.

In her article *Holographic Epistemology: Native Common Sense*, Meyer (2011) delineates three main conduits of knowing:

1) via the objective, physical, outside world, the world of science and measurement, density and force; 2) via the inside subjective world, the space of thought, mind, idea and interiority that helps us understand meaning and our linkages with phenomenon, and finally; 3) via the quantum world shaped by transpatial descriptors and intersections, a spiritual dimension un-linked to religious dogma, described in ethereal, mystic, and yet experiential terms: ie: *All my relations*; or in Science: the *Implicit Order*. Simply put *body, mind, spirit*; or in Maori: *tinana, hinengaro, wairua*. Hawaiians refer to this epistemologic trilogy as: *manaioio, manaolana, and aloha*; Fijians see it as *vuku, kilaka and yalomatua*. (p. 1)

Influenced by the era of modernity, however, we trivialize this ageless trilogy and associate the body, mind, and spirit connection with pop culture, pseudoscience, and new age dogma. Meyer (2008, 2011) untangles these threads showing where these holographic images appear within ancient sources and among current thinkers including the Upanishads, Yoga Sutra, Buddha, Rumi, Māori, Native Hawaiian, Pythagoras, Aristotle, David Hawkins, Ken Wilber, Eckhart Tolle, and more. Although she separates out these three aspects within this conceptual model, she emphasizes it is their simultaneity that characterizes their holographic nature where “the whole of life is found in all parts” (Meyer, 2011, p. 5).

This writing applies Meyer’s (2008, 2011) holographic approach as a research model relevant to this inquiry. The three beams of this holographic method are body, mind, and spirit. The body of this dissertation is the aspect with which the western scientific worldview most easily identifies. It is based on what is tangible, observable, measurable, and verifiable. The body represents what we know through the senses, through direct

experience, that is objectified and accountable to scientific rigor in an attempt to predict, manipulate, and control the outside the world. The body of this inquiry represents the long-term cumulative effects of the colonization process on Indigenous peoples, the western mind, and the environment, particularly of the present-day United States of America. This condition is reflected in the general ill health of the collective populace to which we have unwittingly become susceptible. Science provides the data and statistics related to mental health issues, violent crimes, warfare, depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation, economic disparity, poverty, racism, cancer, heart disease, etc. This research examines the pathology of this culture of violence as a psycho-spiritual disease, the colonization process as its major carrier, and its propagation through the exclusivity of a dualistic worldview.

The mind is one of the other two beams of Meyer's holographic model. It is one that causes some discomfort for the western worldview. It signals subjectivity, "the stain Science and research has not yet been able to wash away" (Meyer, 2011, p. 4). The mind refers to both individual and collective thinking, "the relative truth of what is not seen but yet available via thought, idea, and reflection" (Meyer, 2011, p. 4). Within a Hawaiian epistemology, Meyer (2011) explains the mind does not refer to the neurochemical processes of the brain but references the area of the stomach; "it is the root word for wisdom: *naauao*, which means 'enlightened intestines'" (p. 4). While we experience the world through the sensate, it is the mind that interprets, gives meaning, and responds to these sensations that alone are neutral. This is where science begins to resist and attempts to remedy the situation by separating objectivity from subjectivity. It argues fervently in favor of the validity of only the former, while there is exclusivity between the two. In this research, the mind represents the subjective, felt experience of the researcher. It is a self-reflective inquiry into the deconstruction of the western worldview and an underlying unified epistemology as well as the notion that wellness rests within this recognition.

Lastly, there is the most controversial beam—within a western context of conducting research—of a holographic epistemology. It is the non-local dimension of spirit. Again, this is not a religious or dogmatic concept, rather it is the interconnected field of awareness that Meyer (2011) says "makes sense of the other two [body and mind]." Meyer

(2011) provides examples of the many synonyms used to describe the spiritual dimension such as “The Implicate Order, Non-separability, Akashic Field, Systems Theory, The Divine Milieu, Universal Intelligence, Indigenous Epistemology” to name just a few (p. 5). I prefer the term Original Intelligence as it suggests our inseparability from this primordial awareness that unifies while simultaneously giving rise to the duality in all of its manifestations—mind/body, objectivity/subjectivity, indigenous/western, etc. To think we can distance spirit from matter, and here from research, is a delusion, a misperception of the mind, which paradoxically is a subjective perspective that can only be corroborated directly and non-conceptually. Throughout this inquiry, I align with the spirit of this inquiry as it moves through the body and mind of this doctoral project. Meyer’s (2001, 2008, 2011) holographic epistemology helps to characterize this methodology.

### **Research as Ceremony**

Wilson (2008) joins methodology with the sacred showing through theory, story, and practice how an indigenous research paradigm is ceremony. “The purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves” (Wilson, 2008, p. 11). Within an indigenous worldview, knowledge belongs to the universe, and ceremony provides a means of understanding and interpreting what is the domain of the cosmos. Research is an ancient practice of knowing the world through relational accountability where “you are answerable to all of your relations” (Wilson, 2001, p. 177). This includes the plants, waters, animals, air, earth, humans, the seen and unseen, the whole of the universe; nothing is excluded or insignificant in a relational worldview. Wilson (2008) explains, “reality is not an object but a process of relationship” (p. 73). From this perspective, Indigenous peoples are also in relationship with knowledge, thoughts, and ideas. Research, then, if approached as ceremony follows natural laws of balance and reciprocity, restoring harmony where it has harmed and offended.

Indigenous relationships and identity are intimately bound to the land. This research acknowledges it is the indigenous, ancestral, and spiritual connection rooted in this land that causes much tension and is perceived as threatening for the colonial settlers



of the United States. When in ceremony at the sacred fire on the lands of the Haudenosaunee in Ontario, Canada, I had a dream, which I have often reflected upon. In the dream, somewhere in a forested land, a group of people came upon one another. Before proceeding, they stopped, formed a circle, and began singing to announce their presence. It was only when invited by the other group that they came forward and entered the territory of the other. I cannot help but wonder how our relationships would have been different if the visitors to these lands 500 years ago had adhered to such protocol.

Research cannot be confined to an academic context but is ongoing, shaped, and changed by the experiences of our lives. It can be used to bring meaning and strength to our relationality and connectivity with the essence of life. Wilson (2008) writes, “This bringing things together so that they share the same space is what ceremony is about. This is why research itself is a sacred ceremony within an Indigenous research paradigm, as it is all about building relationships and bridging this sacred space” (p. 87). Within an indigenous pedagogy, the circle is representative of the ceremony of life. When the circle is internalized, our research becomes the living expression of ceremony in action where every breath becomes a prayer. This may seem like a lofty ideal, but scholars such as Wilson (2008) and Meyer (2008) propose the time has come for its inclusion.

In *Research as Ceremony*, Wilson (2008) cautions that the western tendency to break everything down into the smallest of pieces for logical analysis destroys its relationships to the whole (p. 119). He indicates the relatively recent emphasis on the deconstruction of systems and thought is the product of a western orientation whereas a relational worldview builds and harmonizes relationships. Wilson (2008) states, “If you use relational accountability as a style of analysis, the researcher must ask how the analysis of these ideas will help to further build relationships” (p. 119). Indigenous scholars Smith (1999), Brayboy (2006), Meyer (2001, 2008, 2011), Wilson (1996, 2001, 2008) and others have influenced this research, which focuses on the reciprocity between deconstructing and unifying the current western worldview. This inquiry proposes that deconstructing western thought provides the pressure and momentum to move the dominant paradigm toward the repatriation and indigenization of wellness through shifting our worldview. It simply makes common sense to turn to indigenous methodologies to breath new life into

research. Meyer (2011) provides the encouragement needed when she writes, “As always, Indigenous peoples are near; watching, waiting, and ready to be of service” (p. 6). Indigenous scholarship that approaches education and research as ceremony– and knowledge as being alive and sacred—is just one example of how this is being done.

## **Mindful Inquiry**

I was attracted to mindful inquiry as a research methodology because of its emphasis on Buddhist thought and my interest in meditation since first practicing in Nepal. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) introduce mindful inquiry for social science research as a response to an increasingly interdisciplinary and multi-epistemological postmodern and multicultural world that rejects the hegemonic forces of positivism, empiricism, and scientific inquiry as the only valid approaches to research. While mindful inquiry focuses on multiculturalism, which is similar but tangential to the frameworks of indigenous methodologies, the tenets of mindful inquiry closely align with the philosophy and methods of my research approach.

Bentz and Shapiro (1998) contend that social science researchers interested in the practical applicability of knowledge must become mindful inquirers in order to navigate this era of mass communication and information to find what is meaningful. Mindful inquiry draws from critical social science, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and Buddhism. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) state, “We consider them as part of the philosophical foundation of research, not merely as research methods” (p. 37). Importantly, they view this philosophical orientation as critical to the researcher’s relationship with the research. They liken the researcher to an “applied philosopher” in a culturally and socially constructed world rather than an “information-processing machine” working with subjects (p. 35).

Critical social science theory is one of the four components of mindful inquiry. Bentz and Shapiro’s (1998) overview of critical theory deepens our understanding of Brayboy’s (2006) tribal critical race theory discussed earlier. Critical theory was notably developed in Germany by many whom were Jewish and who had fled Nazi Germany. “These Frankfurt-school theorists wanted to explain such events as the rise of fascism and to understand how and why modern society, with its emphasis on rationality and knowledge and on

increasing the scope of individual freedom, could bring about extreme barbarism, authoritarianism, irrationality, and the manipulation and brutalization of consciousness” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 40). Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Sigmund Freud have influenced critical theory as well philosophers Immanuel Kant, Georg Hegel, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Early critical social science theorists were concerned with addressing oppressive political, social, economic, and psychological conditions, and the field eventually moved to include issues of race and discrimination in hope of emancipating the human condition and potential through social and legal channels. Brayboy (2006) takes this a step further situating the process of colonization as central to tribal critical race theory providing an indigenous perspective not obvious within mindful inquiry.

Hermeneutics is another component of mindful inquiry and originates with the theory of interpreting and understanding texts beginning with the Bible. It has expanded, however, to include other historical, literary, and cultural texts and contexts and their languages, concepts, symbols, and meanings of the time. “Hermeneutics involves us in perpetual asking, of anything meaningful that we study as well as of ourselves, ‘Where are you coming from?’” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 40). This approach is fundamental to this research inquiry. Indigenous epistemologies, worldviews, and identities have been the catalyst for my search for the indigenous traditions underlying the western worldview that has its origins with the migration and intermingling of many Indo-European and Semitic peoples and ideas throughout history.

Mindful inquiry also includes phenomenology, a branch of philosophy as well as a movement of the study of subjective experiences and consciousness. It is an aspect I tenuously apply to this research because of the ongoing and confusing debate about its salient characteristics. The appeal of phenomenology is in its seeming differentiation from the inaccurate interpretations of spiritual philosophers and mathematicians, which over time resulted in describing the world merely as objects affecting and reacting to one another. The misrepresentation of natural philosophies that contributed toward the current scientific paradigm is pertinent to this inquiry and is the subject of the next chapter. Phenomenology is helpful in this endeavor because as Bentz and Shapiro (1998) explain, it is “especially important and useful for noticing what things we take for granted

and for trying to step outside of them in order to see things in a new way” (p. 41). This is the essence of mindful inquiry. This research uses the principle of phenomenology to untangle scientifically oriented epistemological frameworks in order to see, hear, respect, and embrace other ways of knowing within both western and indigenous traditions.

The non-western tradition that mindful inquiry embraces is Buddhism. While I am cautious of focusing on any “ism,” compared to other dogmas, Buddhism does not have a fixed doctrine. It seems more appropriate to say mindful inquiry incorporates some fundamental aspects of Buddhism. The Buddhist principles that mindful inquiry embodies include the following:

1. the importance of mindful thought itself;
2. tolerance and the ability to inhabit multiple perspectives;
3. the intention to alleviate suffering;
4. the notion of the clearing, or openness, underlying awareness. (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 39)

I do not use this methodology because I am a Buddhist, but I do have an affinity for Buddhist thought and practices. I was introduced to meditation through the practice of *vipassana*, “an ancient meditation technique of India (and Nepal) that was rediscovered over 2,500 years ago by Gotama the Buddha” (Vipassana Research Institute, 1989, p. 1). *Vipassana* means insight and is the practice of self-observation of the sensations as they arise and fall away in the body/mind. *Vipassana* is based on mindfulness, seeing things in their true nature, of impermanence or *anicca* (Vipassana Research Institute, 1989, p. 11). The mind’s habitual reaction concretizes the sensations and causes suffering. This realization and direct experience of awareness was Buddha’s path to enlightenment and liberation. While there are centers around the world that teach *vipassana*, it is alive in the *terai* of southern Nepal in its purest form where there is a living lineage of *vipassana* practitioners. Deep in the jungle, there is a small monastery where a successive *Maharaj* has lived for over 100 years. The first *Maharaj* was a dedicated meditator, sitting for months at a time until his body vibrated and simply disappeared with no trace, becoming one with the Universe. This is the history told to me by the *Maharaj* of the monastery when doing my thesis research in Nepal.

In their text, Bentz and Shapiro (1998) quote Kabat-Zinn (1974), a professor of mindfulness meditation, who offers an insightful description of mindful inquiry:

The spirit of inquiry is fundamental to living mindfully. Inquiry is not just a way to solve problems. It is a way to make sure you are staying in touch with the basic mystery of life itself and of our presence here. . . Inquiry doesn't mean looking for answers, especially quick answers which come out of superficial thinking. It means asking without expecting answers, just pondering the questions, carrying the wondering with you, letting it percolate, bubble, cook, ripen, come in and out of awareness, just as everything else comes in and out of awareness. Inquiry is not so much thinking about answers, although the questioning will produce a lot of thoughts that look like answers. It really involves just listening to the thinking that your questioning evokes, as if you were sitting by the side of the stream of your own thoughts, listening to the water flow over and around the rocks, listening, listening, and watching an occasional leaf or twig as it is carried along. (p. 39)

Although Kabat-Zin is not referring to social science research, his comments speak to the essence of mindfulness relevant across disciplines. Appendix C provides a list of the guiding principles of mindful inquiry as a social science research methodology.

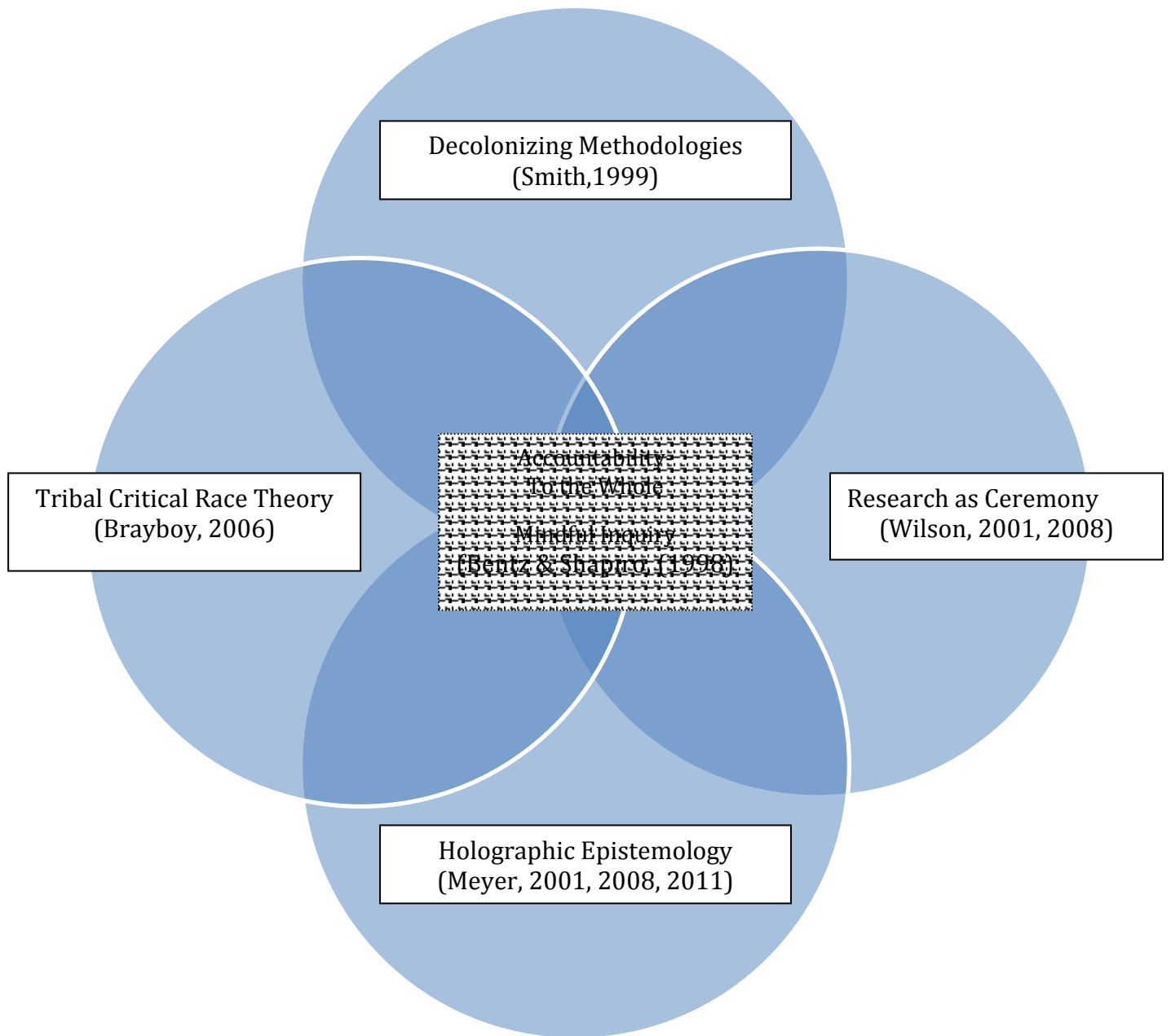
The graphic in Figure 3 (p. 68) illustrates the combination of methodologies and integrated methods I use to address the three research questions of the project: 1) In what ways is the pre-Socratic tradition and epistemology of the Archaic and Classical Greek periods, as detailed by the iconoclastic scholar Peter Kingsley, fundamentally similar to American Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing? 2) Why was the knowledge of the pre-Socratics left behind, and what forces shaped the current western worldview and colonization of North America? 3) What is the critical need for shifting the dominant paradigm toward one based on a fundamental axiom of holism, and what are the implications for Indigenous and non-Native relations and wellbeing today?

## **Research Setting**

The research setting for this project includes different time periods, places of interiority, and interstitial spaces. It travels from the Archaic and Classical Greek periods

and its intersection with the American Indigenous peoples, into the rise of western civilization and its worldview, across the Atlantic to the collision with the original inhabitants of North America, and into the future of our possible reconciliation and wellness. This mindful inquiry uses an applied, indigenous-based philosophy of holism. Through this epistemological lens, it links disparate pieces of the West's history that on the surface perhaps have not been brought together in such a way before. It is an attempt to understand the story behind the current paradigm and how its erosion over the past 2,500 years has resulted in travesty with Indigenous peoples, the natural world, and western society as a whole. Specifically, it seeks to uncover the myriad factors that contributed to the distortion of ancient Greek mysticism and culminated in the current worldview that justifies conquest and colonization. This research explores the critical need for the ownership of this history and the engagement with an indigenous-based, unified approach to knowledge that brings the western worldview into balance with ancient western knowledge and indigenous ways of knowing.

This research cannot be tested or evaluated using empirical methods. Building genuine relationships proves difficult to measure. The focus is on deconstructing and synthesizing, on fluidity not concretization. If we look closely and listen intently, however, at both the inner and outer worlds, the science is there. Will we have the courage to make this shift? This research suggests this is the time to draw yet another line in the proverbial sands and cross this threshold together. The chapters that follow comprise the research story that tells of this possibility.



*Figure 3: Diagram of Research Methodology*

## Chapter 4

### A Pre-Socratic Epistemology

#### **The Pre-Socratics**

The purpose of this chapter is to uncover epistemological themes that emerge from Peter Kingsley's treatise on pre-Socratic philosophy and tradition in his books *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (1995), *In the Dark Places of Wisdom* (1999), *Reality* (2003), and *A Story Waiting to Pierce You: Mongolia, Tibet and the Destiny of the Western World* (2010). Before focusing on the iconoclastic scholar's revisionary contributions to interdisciplinary fields of study, it is helpful to introduce the elusive and relatively unknown pre-Socratics of the seventh to fifth centuries BCE in the ancient Greek world. They are known as such because they precede the eminent Athenian figure and a time that marked a critical shift in the orientation of the western world. These enigmatic figures include Thales of Miletus, Pythagoras of Samos, Heraclitus of Ephesus, Parmenides and Zeno of Elea, Empedocles and Gorgias of Sicily, to name a few. The current western worldview, unbeknownst to most, has its roots in a spiritual and traditional lineage of this pre-Socratic era.

Today, western society refers to the pre-Socratics as the first philosophers, the "proto-scientists," or early rationalists. Such bias, however, has done a disservice to an ancient tradition rooted in early Greek mysticism that was once integrated into everyday life throughout the eastern Mediterranean. The Greek word for mysticism is MUO, which means "to shut the eyes or mouth" (Shapero, n.d., para. 1). Mysticism was an initiation into the mysteries through an inner knowing and silence focused on the human being's relationship with the Divine or ultimate reality.

There have been but few scholars who have pierced the myth of the pre-Socratics suggesting their "non-rationality," at least in the conventional definition of the term, and asserting instead they were practitioners of an intuitive mystical tradition. Ruiz (2007), a more recent scholar who relies heavily on Kingsley's work in his dissertation on Heraclitus, chooses his other sources on the pre-Socratics carefully, and a few of them need to be mentioned here. Early on, Guthrie (1935) compared these early mystics with Orpheus, a



poet, musician, and prophet of mythical stature intertwined with the mythologies of Demeter, Persephone, and Dionysus. Orphic esotericism connects further back to the Eleusinian Mysteries of the Mycenaean period (1600–1100 BCE). The pre-Socratic tradition like Orphism was initiatory, associated with natural and cosmic cycles, and replete with shamanic motifs (Guthrie, 1935). Later, Dodds (1951) further exposed the “irrationality” of the ancient Greeks, specifically this relatedness with shamanic influences and elements that the Romanian historian Eliade (1964) was writing about as occurring in central Asia and Eastern Europe. Ruiz (2007) asserts that although Dodds was not particularly sympathetic to such mystical tendencies, he contributed significantly to a more authentic presentation of the pre-Socratics than most researchers (p. xiv).

Another exception is M. L. West (2001) who compared pre-Socratic philosophy with the spiritual traditions of the distant East. Ruiz (2007) comments on the merits of West’s analysis and writes, “Its single greatest virtue is that it makes glaringly obvious the deep affinities and similarities between the writings of the earliest Greek philosophers, which are commonly thought of as unquestionably rational and scientific, and eastern texts traditionally read as obviously mystical and religious” (p. xv). These few authors provide alternative perspectives in lieu of the conventional presentations historically found in the pre-Socratic literature and open the door for Kingsley who ventures into the interiority of these mystics.

This brief introduction brings us to the focus of this chapter, the work of Kingsley, a British scholar, and his in-depth study of a tradition that previously has never been so intimately explored. It is his personal affinity for the pre-Socratics that sets his work apart from other classicists and historians. *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic* is an academic text that critically analyzes archaic and classical Greek philosophy in the context of western mysticism, particularly the hidden similarities between Empedocles and Pythagorean/Orphic transmissions and how it moved through Egypt and ancient Persia mixing with Hermetic alchemy and early Sufism. With this text, Kingsley establishes his reputation, bringing new learning to pre-Socratic philosophy with ramifications potentially reaching across disciplines. With a hint of calculated intent, he then exposes himself more

overtly in a combined role of scholar and contemporary mystic when authoring *In The Dark Place of Wisdom, Reality, and A Story Waiting to Pierce You*.

Although these works are equal in their academic rigor, the style of his writing noticeably changes, making them read more like epic novels with pages of literary sources and notes presented at the end so not to distract the reader from the rhythm of an unfolding story. Kingsley brings meaning to ancient Greek poems that have confused or been unsatisfactorily understood by most scholars and suggests that these words are indelibly etched with an intelligence that cannot die. These fragments reveal a tradition that, albeit obscure and subtle, is alive, and it, Kingsley (1999) says, “exists to draw people home” (p. 8).

While *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic* analyzes the Orphic-Pythagorean traditions of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE Greek world, *In the Dark Place of Wisdom and Reality* present a more direct perspective that can only be achieved by engaging the epistemology that Kingsley seeks to reveal. It is a process of “coming to know” much in the same ways indigenous researchers, discussed in the previous chapter, have explored in their own research. By merging with the spirit or consciousness of the tradition, Kingsley interprets the poetry of Parmenides and Empedocles within an interrelated pre-Socratic, Pythagorean, and Orphic context. It is essential to address Kingsley’s propensity for the mystical because it points toward much broader considerations of this research inquiry. Western society sets spirituality apart from daily life, our systems, the sciences, and academic inquiry. For Indigenous peoples, spirituality is embedded within all aspects of culture, and this is a defining difference between the two worldviews. The mentally constructed chasm between science and consciousness in the West and the consequences of this divide related to indigenous and western relations and wellness efforts today are central themes of later chapters of this dissertation. To better grasp the predicament of the West and to shift its vantage point, we need consider a pre-Socratic way of knowing that is accessed through an awareness and focus of an extraordinary kind. Kingsley couples his historical and philological analysis with a direct application of this epistemology.

In an interview entitled *Remembering What We Have Forgotten*, Kingsley describes this attention of extreme precision. “It’s a focus with one’s whole being, with one’s mind,

with the sensation in one's body, with one's whole awareness, with one's feeling, one's love. Everything comes together in the point of an arrow" (Whittaker, 2011, p. 8). Kingsley honed this way of observation when trying to understand the words of Parmenides, "the father of western logic," and Empedocles, known for his interest in cosmogony. Kingsley knew he would never be able to truly understand this tradition with the mind alone and began experiencing it through the whole body, "most immediately the belly" (Whittaker, 2011, p. 8). Kingsley further states, "I can explain any aspect of Parmenides' teaching without a single thought—simply from the consciousness within my body" (Whittaker, 2011, p. 8). It is analogous to inter- and intra- species communication in nature seen in the movement of herds, the flocking of birds, the decision-making patterns of insects, etc. Like with Parmenides, Kingsley approaches Empedocles with a particular attitude, respect, and breath requisite for merging his consciousness with that of a singular mind. Academia's general discomfort with such an unfamiliar approach reveals a systemic and embedded bias within western society that reasoning and logic in the current sense hold exclusivity to what constitutes knowledge and how we know what we know.

Kingsley's books, articles, and interviews may seem self-indulgent and to some arrogant due to his personal and confident voice. He unyieldingly scoffs at modern-day scholarship that in his explanation continues to misrepresent an entire discipline because of the misuse of "rationalism" and a reluctance to engage knowledge through direct and active participation with it. From several telephone consultations, my impression is that his tone is not meant to belittle or mock but to have the opposite effect. It shakes us from a slumber impervious to our true identity, potential, and dignity. Kingsley's earlier books detail a Greek world where philosophy once was a practical science, a way of living as a divine being. In lieu of debating the details of these conclusions, Kingsley invites us to open to a different way of knowing that shakes the foundation of what we know, our history, and self-identity. He not only presents new insights but also beckons us to take the journey ourselves insisting that such knowledge cannot be known otherwise and anything less is incomplete.

Despite common belief, the Greeks are not the progenitors of western civilization. The ancestry of the West is much more diverse as peoples, goods, and especially ideas

flowed and crisscrossed directions throughout time migrating from the Eurasian steppe and India, across the Iranian Plateau, ancient Anatolia, and Greece, from the Arabian Peninsula, into Egypt, and throughout Europe, Scandinavia, and the Baltic region. Not only has post-Socratic, Greek society claimed western civilization as its own, it co-opted and assimilated a tradition buried within its own history. Kingsley (1995, 1999, 2003, 2010) provides a compelling revisionary history of an ancient Greek epistemology and the landscape in which it once flourished.

Phocaea was an Ionian Greek city on the western coast of Anatolia, what is present-day Turkey. The Phocaeans are known for the settling of Massalia, what is now known as Marseille on the southern coast of France. Historically, they were explorers and traders and worshipped the god Apollo Oulis, “‘he who makes whole’ –the destroyer who heals, the healer who destroys” (Kingsley, 1999, p. 57). Their devotion, however, was not of an external God or religion but of an inner awakening, of dying to the illusory world of the mind and its entrapments before one dies. Those dedicated to this path were known in some places as Pythagoreans. Kingsley describes them as “‘the wise’ because their wisdom verged on the divine; because they were able to see beyond the surface and behind appearances; because they were able to interpret oracles and dreams and the riddles of existence” (1999, p. 27). During the sixth century BCE, the Persians forced the Phocaeans, who Kingsley (1999) says were rejected for their practices, to leave their homes on and around the west coast of Asia Minor. They relocated in Corsica and then later to southern Italy, in a town called Elea in ancient Greek, and Velia in Latin, where the tradition of Apollo was carried from one generation to the next. This is where Parmenides, whose ancestry Kingsley (1999) directly links to the Phocaeans, was born. It is the tradition to which, Kingsley (2003) also shows, Empedocles of Sicily was connected.

There is a particularly critical issue to consider regarding the founding of Greek colonies such as Elea. Kingsley (1999, 2003) explains that doing so was brought forth from another dimension of mythic proportion.

To the Greeks, founding a colony was closely bound up with oracles; but it was also bound up with heroes. The first people who ever founded colonies were the heroes from the mythical past. And if you wanted to found a colony then heroes were your

prototype: the hero held in his hand the mythical map for you to use and follow.  
(Kingsley, 1999, pp. 28-29)

These Greek colonizers followed their god Apollo. Initially, Kingsley's references to mythical and heroic colonizers were disconcerting, a red flag indicating perhaps a blind spot of the author's own imperialist conditioning. His description of their zealous purposefulness sounded like an earlier version of Euro-America's manifest destiny and a convenient way to legitimize and belie the West's colonization of the world over.

The word *colony* derives from the Latin—"to inhabit, cultivate, frequent, practice, tend, guard, respect" and from the Indo-European root \*kwel—"to move around" (Harper, 2014, n.p.). From an indigenous perspective, colonization, when examined within such a linguistic and metaphorical context, is likened to a systematic process deleteriously imposed upon Native peoples (Newcomb, 2008).

Thus colonization can be thought of in terms of the steps involved in a process of cultivation: taking control of the indigenous soil, uprooting the existing indigenous plants (peoples), overturning the soil (the indigenous ways of life), planting new colonial seeds (people) or transplanting colonial plants (people) from another environment, and harvesting the resulting crops (resources) or else picking the fruits (wealth) that result from the labor of the cultivation (colonization).

(Newcomb, 2008, loc. 426)

Kingsley's treatise on the pre-Socratics, however, proposes a more esoteric meaning of the practice. Some of the early Pythagoreans were colonizers of a different kind, moving to other lands to integrate and apply their tradition inwardly while living unobtrusively in their new environments. These small groups were not driven by imperialistic tendencies but often by the need to escape their own conquest and persecution. Close examination of Kingsley's bold declarations, then, point to an ancient practice of colonization that as history shows went terribly awry.

Kingsley asserts that these teachings have been grossly misunderstood and subsumed by an elite Athenian circle, the effects which ripple out into virtually every corner and aspect of the world. Kingsley (1995, 1999, 2003) identifies Plato and his student Aristotle as the primary culprits in plagiarizing and misconstruing this pre-Socratic

tradition. There were several factors that led to the Athenian reshaping of ancient philosophy, mystery, and magic that the world now accepts as the history of western civilization. Kingsley attributes their motives to the seductiveness of the “golden age of Athenian achievement,” spurred by the drive for power and prestige, which largely ensued from claiming ownership and originality of ancient ideas (1995, p. 103). In addition to this deliberateness, Kingsley’s (1995, 1999, 2003) proclamations indicate an unconscious element at work:

We can still trace out how, well over two thousand years ago, the schools of Plato and Aristotle put the seal on what was to become the most enduring Athenian contribution to intellectual history in the West: instead of the love of wisdom, philosophy turned into the love of talking and arguing about the love of wisdom. Since then the talking and arguing have pushed everything else out of the picture—until now we no longer know of anything else or can even imagine that there could be. (pp. 31-32)

As philosophy became discursive and argumentative, the connection with its divine source faded. An oral-based tradition became written, further obfuscating its essence and accessibility (Kingsley, 1995, 1999, 2003). The altered version initially spread through a Platonic Academy that lasted through the Hellenistic era.

Kingsley (1995, 1999, 2003) makes a strong case that implicates Plato and Aristotle in the dilution of Parmenidean and Empedoclean teachings. In Kingsley’s interpretation, Socrates was an ally of Parmenides while Plato coveted a succession that passed not to him but to Parmenides’ student, Zeno. Plato, then, may have had ulterior motives for making the teachings his own. These specifics, while intriguing, are not as relevant to this writing as is a much broader consideration. Whether it was Plato and Aristotle or those who interpreted them who were culpable is secondary to the recognition that clearly a shift began after the time of Socrates that dramatically affected the course and collision of the western and indigenous worlds.

There have been hundreds of philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists following Socrates from the Classical and Hellenistic eras to the Greco-Roman period through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance and the current era. Plato, Aristotle,

Descartes, Galileo, Bacon, Newton, Darwin, Einstein are just some of the minds commonly associated with the rise of the western worldview, which is covered in a later chapter. For now, suffice it to say there was a distinctive movement away from an original and lived tradition, which existed before an Athenian, Greco-Roman, and Christian era that stripped the divine from reason and logic, and was driven by a new paradigm of the mind that splintered from ancient Greek mysticism into further fragmentations of philosophy, science, and religion. The consequence of this trajectory has been the rise of a dualistic and materialistic worldview now implicit within the western paradigm.

With this background, Kingsley (1995, 1999, 2003) details a forgotten tradition that once was, where philosophy—the *love of wisdom*—and science were in divine union. Their inseparability is still apparent in the present as *all* scientists receive doctorates of *philosophy* (Ph.Ds), not doctorates of *science*, though this goes unnoticed by many. For those like Parmenides and Empedocles, philosophy was an inner science carrying them to an ultimate awareness, which lies behind the physical world of seeming opposites. To share this wisdom, Parmenides left behind one known poem, a “sacred text” of hidden meaning (Kingsley, 2003, p. 199).

It is initiatory and opens with a personal journey that comprises the first part of the poem; it is included in Appendix D. A deep longing carries Parmenides into the underworld, led by the daughters of the Sun to the gates of Night and Day guarded by Justice, to meet an unnamed goddess of another world. The first part of Parmenides’ allegorical poem is the central theme of *In the Dark Places of Wisdom*, and Kingsley studies it with philological precision. It is a journey of initiates, of “dying before one dies” (Kingsley, 2003, p. 31). Additionally, his translation of a string of Greek words inscribed on a piece of stone with Parmenides’ name that excavators found in Elea in the 1960s dispels common misnomers about the “philosopher.” The words *Ouliadês Iatromantis Apollo* identify Parmenides as a son of Apollo Oulios, a sacred lineage devoted to the healing practices of the time (Kingsley, 1999, pp. 106-110). Parmenides was not a logician of metaphysics favoring reason over the senses but a healer, *Iatromantis*, revealing the falsity of any such separateness of the divine. The term *Iatromantis* is most accurately translated from ancient Greek as “healer-diviner” and is often described as a “Greek shaman.”

Naming Parmenides as a prophet/healer/priest of the mysteries gives fuller meaning to his poem. It contains knowledge imparted to him by the goddess of the underworld, who Kingsley (1999, 2003) identifies as Persephone of Tartarus and Hades. Persephone, also called Kore in Greek mythology, is an Olympian goddess and central figure of the Eleusinian Mysteries of the Mycenaean period. She represents the sacred unity of all aspects of existence throughout all time and cycles of change and where human consciousness serves as a vehicle for looking within and discovering the divine awareness of oneness. In the next sections of the poem, Parmenides describes what the goddess teaches him about the nature of reality and the illusion of appearances. Accordingly, there is a single, unified, eternal reality where every-thing exists, and there is not any-thing that does not; “nothing” cannot exist because if it does, it becomes “something.” Paradoxically, the One Reality is also empty and formless, the ground of all Being, the no-thing from which the illusionary, dualistic world of the mind and senses is born. The world we think is real is a projection of the mind that exists inseparable from the oneness of an all-encompassing ultimate reality. There is nothing outside of the mind. Like in a dream or a movie, if we step back, we may become aware of ourselves watching and participating at the same time. The dreamer and the dreamt are one.

While Kingsley (2003) continues to focus on Parmenides in the first part of *Reality*, he dedicates the second to Empedocles. Although Empedocles was from Sicily, Kingsley (2003) links him to the same tradition as Parmenides of Elea and claims he, like his contemporary, was grossly misunderstood. Having also died before dying, Empedocles was fully aware of his divine nature. Kingsley (1995, 2003) interprets Empedocles’ fragmented verses on the cosmos and four elements uncovering a deeper meaning intended that reveals itself when approached with a heightened sense of reason, logic, and awareness implicit in a pre-Socratic way of knowing. Before delving any further here and identifying emergent, epistemological themes, there is Kingsley’s latest and most controversial book to introduce.

*A Story Waiting To Pierce You: Mongolia, Tibet and the Destiny of the Western World* (2010), replete with pages of references longer than the text itself, further challenges Kingsley’s fate with some audiences. It is the creation story of ancient Greek civilization



and has a distinctive, shamanic motif. Abaris Skywalker was an Avar, a reference not necessarily to the infamous Eurasian Avars of approximately the sixth century to early ninth century or the Caucasian Avars of the late medieval and early modern times. The earlier Avars are known to have originated in the Altai Mountains of central Asia, and these may be the descendants of the Avars of Abaris Skywalker. Kingsley (2010) describes them as “a mysterious group of people whose origins disappear into the past,” who came from Hyperborea in the far north, “beyond the gateway of Central Asia which opens out onto the vastness now known to us as eastern Siberia and Mongolia, as Tibet and China” (pp. 5-6). He traveled in a most particular way and for a specific reason. According to Kingsley’s narrative, Abaris moved in a trance, “in a state of ecstasy, holding a god inside him—the god Apollo” (Kingsley, 2010, p. 4).

Abaris circumambulated by way of an arrow, a symbol found within Tibetan and Mongol Buddhism, but having its origin in the shamanic practices of Mongolia and Central Asia and found in American Indian tribes and nations (Kingsley, 2010). Abaris had a unique relationship with his arrow, both holding it and being carried by it. The arrow was alive, and Abaris was indivisibly one with the object. As Abaris traveled toward Greece, ancient Greeks ventured northward, and there was a particular meeting of importance between Abaris and Pythagoras from Samos. Recognizing the latter as a kindred spirit of Apollo, Abaris passed his arrow to him. It was a calculated exchange; its purpose was to give rise to a period of Greek civilization that began with Pythagoras with traces of its timeless presence stretching into the distant past. This brief synopsis of this creation story of the West, which has never been written before, is preparation for Kingsley’s reclamation of a pre-Socratic way of knowing.

Having introduced Kingsley’s (1995, 1999, 2003, 2010) major works, the next section identifies ten epistemological themes that emerge from his academic and intimate exploration of an eclipsed tradition at the roots of western civilization. This section is not meant to verify or corroborate Kingsley’s revisionary work within the classical literature and field of ancient Greek philosophy. He has exercised scholarly precision in showing where the gaps in our understanding exist and provides new ways of knowing more deeply key aspects of natural philosophy not existent within the literature. Readers are advised to

turn to his books and articles if interested in following his investigative trail through his research notes. For these reasons, this section focuses exclusively on his conclusions, further highlighting his treatise on this pre-Socratic tradition by naming and arranging his interpretations thematically. Although numbered, these themes that I identify do not follow any particular order but are circular, folding into and out of one another. Also, the verb tenses switch between past and present making this section read as history and also as knowledge that is alive and current. The themes include the following: Transmitting Knowledge, The Cosmos and Four Elements, Places of Power, Incubation, *Mêtis* and Common Sense, Divine Madness, A Way of Living, The Stillness of Motion, *Aporia*—Pathlessness, and The Oneness of Everything.

### **Epistemological Theme 1: Transmitting Knowledge**

In Kingsley's (1995, 1999, 2003, 2010) four books, he makes reference to how this pre-Socratic tradition was once transmitted, passing from one generation to another, before it was buried beneath the sands of time. It was primarily an oral tradition of myths and epic poetry. Orphic and Pythagorean verses became the basis of Socrates' *Gorgias* and Plato's *Phaedo*, famous dialogues describing humankind's relationship with the underworld (Kingsley, 2003, p. 105). Kingsley (2003) states, "Plato was living at a time of crucial transition in the West from a primarily oral to a predominately literary culture" (p. 110). What was once safeguarded and shared privately within a limited circle was made public and open for interpretation for those who were privileged enough to be literate, which was a small portion of the population of a classical Greek city.

Prior, the language of poetry was incantatory and oracular, captivating through the resonance and rhythm of sound. It was seldom straightforward but was paradoxical and deceptive, relying on riddles to convey hidden meaning. Kingsley (1999) calls it "the language of initiation" (p. 118). The tradition passed from father to son, to men connected with Apollo: a practice that Kingsley (1999) traces back to Phocaea and continually parallels with Orphic and Pythagorean circles. The transmission of the tradition was not familial in the traditional sense; it was without borders. "Becoming a Pythagorean meant

being adopted, being introduced into a great family. Essentially it was a process of rebirth: of becoming a child again, a *kouros*” (Kingsley, 1999, p. 155).

Those like Parmenides and Empedocles were not teachers in the classical sense but masters at drawing people within. They walked in two worlds, leaving behind the human condition by being fully awake and alive within its appearances. Their presence and way of being was not achieved through human effort and thought but by the acquiescence to a primordial tradition.

The Greek word Parmenides uses is *thumos*, and *thumos* means the energy of itself.

It’s the raw presence in us that senses and feels; the massed power of our emotional being. Above all it’s the energy of passion, appetite, yearning, and longing. (Kingsley, 2003, p. 27)

In carrying this tradition, these healers helped initiates follow this stirring and aching, but they could be led only so far. Ultimately, it was always a personal journey that stripped one of all they thought they knew.

The revelation of knowledge was deeply intimate, and there was a reciprocal relationship between the human and the Divine that only each individually could cultivate and grow. Empedocles used the language of agriculture, of nourishing the tradition like tending to plants (Kingsley, 1995). While it was the responsibility of the student to cultivate the seeds of consciousness, it was only one aspect of a divine relationship; Awareness, too, had to find you. This way of transmission may seem esoteric, but it was once purely logical. Even more, as told in *A Story Waiting to Pierce You*, it was how a tradition came to be, sown out of Awareness and grown into physicality.

## **Epistemological Theme 2: The Cosmos and Four Elements**

The pre-Socratics studied the cosmos and how existence is what it is. Empedocles identified four elements, which combine to make the physical world: air, earth, fire, and water. Empedocles’ cosmology associates Zeus with air or more accurately aether, Hera with earth, Hades with fire, and Nestis with water (Kingsley, 1995, p. 47). While some debate which element represents which god within Greek mythology, Kingsley (1995) says what is relevant is simply that each element is considered to be a god. Additionally, many

gods and goddesses were composites of two or more elemental principles. Also of significance is the relationship between the sun, earth, and underworld. "Fire rose up to become the sun and had its origins in the bowels of the earth, implying that the source of daylight and illumination derives from the dark depths of the underworld" (Kingsley, 1995, p. 51). Accordingly, light resides in the dark, and there is a balanced and alchemical relationship between the sun, earth, and underworld. "Empedocles uses the imagery of mixing wine with water to describe the swirl of creation as Love mixed the four elements to produce mortal things" (Kingsley, 1995, p. 134). In contrast, Strife served to "un-mix" these fundamental elements back toward their pure, immortal, and formless nature.

Empedocles' teachings reveal an epistemology that rests on a precarious edge where nothing is as it appears. Here, Love and Strife serve unorthodox roles. Aphrodite is a trickster, seducing and enticing the soul out of oneness into the mortal realm of desire and attachment. She traps the soul, and Strife sets it free (Kingsley, 2003). Aphrodite mesmerizes the soul with earthly life, and we unwittingly become transfixed by what keeps us stuck in the illusionary state of our mortality. Despite all efforts, our longing, aching, searching, and discontent cannot be satiated by anything of this world. The antidote is in seeing past Aphrodite's charm and seduction. Ironically, it is Strife that provides relief from such bondage within the mortal world of relativity. It means facing our own separation and annihilation, the dissolution of all we know, turning our world upside down and inside out. "The power of absolute terror and fear, that can finally get us home is not Love but Strife" (Kingsley, 2003, p. 370).

Within an Empedoclean context, Love is not the formless, unintentional, aware, nameless condition of unity, for which we may mistakenly confuse Aphrodite's physical expression. Instead, Love and Strife represent opposing cycles within an elemental cosmology through which the soul passes to become aware of its true nature and the divine unity of these forces. The universe is eternally cyclic, and the soul moves within the greater cosmic breath to become aware of what it has always been. Kingsley (2003) re-tells this ancient story of the soul coming to know and experience itself as a *daimôn*, a divine being, through these cosmic cycles. Love draws the soul into physicality through the mixing of elements while Strife, through dissolution, returns it beyond the material to its home of

immortality. Contrary to human reasoning and according to divine logic, “Empedocles ends every cycle not with Love but with where it began—with the stage of total Strife” (Kingsley, 2003, p. 351).

### **Epistemological Theme 3: Places of Power**

The pre-Socratic tradition repeatedly references two places of importance, volcanic craters and the shelter of lairs. When the Phocaeans and their Pythagorean neighbors moved from the eastern edges of Asia Minor, their new home was located in a highly volcanic region. The Aeolian Islands are an archipelago in the Tyrrhenian Sea between Italy and Sicily with active volcanoes of several thousands of years. Pythagoras, Parmenides, and Empedocles lived within this volatility (Kingsley, 1999). Pythagoras migrated from the Greek island of Samos to Kroton in southern Italy. Northwest of Kroton, Parmenides was born in Elea while Empedocles was from nearby Sicily, home to the active volcano of Mount Etna. The physical environment of the area was volcanic and the element of fire embedded within the mythology of the tradition.

The central fire of the pre-Socratics originates deep within the bowels of the underworld. Its eternal eruption of volcanic fire gives rise to the physical sun of middle earth (Kingsley, 1995).

The inevitable implication is that the [Pythagorean] central fire is being identified with Tartarus. The two are interchangeable: Tartarus is the central fire, and the central fire is Tartarus. (Kingsley, 1995, p. 185)

Contrary to Judeo-Christian orthodox images of a fiery hell of banishment, suffering, and punishment, Kingsley (1995) describes the depths of Tartarus as a divine reservoir of immortality. In the Greek mythology, Tartarus is a place far below Hades as well as a deity who emerges from chaos and is the source of first light and of the cosmos. On the slopes of Mount Etna, there is evidence of an ancient practice of fire worship where craters were places of access to unearthly power (Kingsley, 1995). While history records Empedocles’ disappearance into Mount Etna as suicidal, a tradition where volcanoes are entry points into the underworld suggests there is more to his death than speculation based on outer appearances.

Unlike the evocative imagery of volcanic places, the reference to lairs is subtler but equally powerful within the pre-Socratic tradition. Places that provided solitude and darkness akin to an animal's den were the healing places of the *Iatromantis*. These priests of Apollo were also known as *phôlarchos*, "lords of the lair" (Kingsley, 1999, pp. 79-84). The association between healers and the resting places of animals gives particular meaning to the purposefulness of sacred spaces in the ancient world. In the temples and underground caverns, healers retreated to guide others in the art of laying perfectly still, in a practice called incubation.

#### **Epistemological Theme 4: Incubation**

Although the healing practice of the pre-Socratics is the predecessor of modern medicine, it is quite different from its successor. The tradition of Asclepius is about healing the soul. The *Iatromantis* of the time did not heal others but guided people in experiencing a state of consciousness where one heals through direct knowledge of and relationship with the Divine. Their technique, if it can be called such, was quite simple, and the difficulty lies with its non-complexity and suspension of the logical mind.

Incubation is the practice of dying to be reborn (Kingsley, 1995, 1999, 2003). This language makes quite clear that while in a suspended state "one descends into the depths in order to ascend" (Kingsley, 1995, p. 252). The journey is personal and non-conceptual, expressed in the initiatory language of Greek poetry. Parmenides' poem describes an ancient shamanic practice that Kingsley (1995, 1999, 2003) associates with the traditions of Central Asia and Siberia. "The *Iatromantis* healers in Greece and shamans in Siberia, or Central Asia, are part of one and the same phenomenon" (Kingsley, 2003, p. 35). In fact, these enigmatic mystics were not insular, provincial, held by territorial boundaries, or deterred by great distances. They traveled in many directions leaving subtle traces of their presence within the traditions of Greece, the Asiatic North, Tibet, India, and Nepal, while also moving up and down the Nile, and across tribal regions of Mesopotamia (Kingsley, 1999).

The earliest reference of a shamanic motif in ancient Greek literature is to Orpheus' descent into the underworld (Kingsley, 1999). Parmenides' poem vividly characterizes this

same theme, which he expresses within the context of legendary Greek mythology. He serves as a messenger, sharing his journey to the goddess and the knowledge she imparts for mortal souls about the nature of reality.

Parmenides is carried in a chariot drawn by the daughters of the Sun into the dark unknown. The imagery along the seemingly endless path is marked in two particular ways. First is the repetitive pattern of spinning circles. “The chariot wheels spin on the axle, the doors spin on the their axles as they open into the underworld” (Kingsley, 1999, p. 125). Secondly, everything is silent except for the ubiquitous, musical sound of the chariot’s piping as it pulls Parmenides to his destination. Kingsley (1999) explains that both are indicators of entering an otherworldly dimension of consciousness:

Ancient Greek accounts of incubation repeatedly mention certain signs that mark the point of entry into another world: into another state of awareness that’s neither waking nor sleep. One of the signs is that you become aware of a rapid spinning movement. Another is that you hear the powerful vibration produced by a piping, whistling, hissing sound. (p. 128)

Kingsley (1999) compares this account with *samadhī* a non-dualistic state of consciousness accessed through meditation, which awakens the dormant *kundalinī* energy at the base of the spine symbolized by a rising and hissing serpent power within the yogic philosophy of Eastern traditions and particularly within the Upanishads of the Vedanta.

As Parmenides crosses this threshold, the gates guarded by Justice open, and he enters the home of Persephone of Tartarus. There, the goddess welcomes him most graciously, recognizing in him the quality of someone who consciously walks between worlds.

As a ‘man who knows’ he’s an initiate—someone who’s able to enter another world, to die before dying. And the knowledge of how to do that is what leads him to the wisdom given by Persephone. (Kingsley, 1999, p. 121)

Just as Parmenides embodies a particular essence, so does the place where he arrives. It is a “feminine world of incredible beauty and depth and power and wisdom” (Kingsley, 1999, p. 36). Light resides with darkness, and the goddess makes known their sacred marriage. What is ironic is that Parmenides makes the journey to their union in an effortless state of

stillness while simultaneously carried by his longing and love for the Divine; it is made through incubation.

Here, there is absolutely nothing to do. There are no steps to learn or processes to master. It cannot be understood in any rational terms. In underground chambers, one would simply lie as if sleeping, sinking within, and “wait for wisdom and healing to come from someplace else” (Kingsley, 1999, p. 80). The priests of Apollo were not only shamanic messengers conveying wisdom and knowledge as received from a divine intelligence, they supported others in making the journey without interference (Kingsley, 1999). The practice of incubation is still alive for those with the longing to listen and the sense that the world is not only what it appears.

### **Epistemological Theme 5: *Mêtis* and Common Sense**

The essence of this tradition is bound with a certain focus needed to illuminate the deception of the physical world. Fragmentation that is characteristic of the human experience cannot be real within a reality that has no such distinction and is inclusive of every demarcation. Aphrodite’s irresistibility, though, convinces that the illusion is real, that our lives and perceptions are separate. The pre-Socratics understood the mystery of inversion, that the dream of humans is the land of the dead and the underworld the home of rebirth (Kingsley, 2003). This illogical reversal is the greatest smoke-and-mirrors trick of all times. It renders us helplessly lost, at its mercy, and oblivious to our confusion (Kingsley, 2003). The heroes of the past left behind traces of a tradition where the purpose of life was wakening from this dream and returning to reality.

Becoming conscious necessitated a peculiar quality of perceiving through the senses and was tied to a single Greek word of extraordinary meaning.

*Mêtis* was the Greek term for cunning, skillfulness, practical intelligence; and especially for trickery. It was what could make humans, at the most basic and down-to-earth level, equal to the gods. *Mêtis* might sound like just another concept. But really it was the opposite of everything we understand by concepts. It meant a particular quality of intense awareness that always manages to stay focused on the whole: on the lookout for hints, however subtle, for guidance in whatever form it



happens to take, for signs of the route to follow however quickly they might appear or disappear. (Kingsley, 2003, p. 90)

*Mêtis* is wisdom coupled with cunning and alertness; she is a pre-Olympian deity whose power demands that absolutely nothing go unnoticed. It necessitates becoming conscious of every crevice of our unconscious without thinking our way through, which only keeps us paralyzed and trapped. This is no easy task, but fortunately, as we focus and cultivate *mêtis*, it nourishes and grows itself (Kingsley, 2003). Accepting and respecting every piece of the illusion with one's entire being and living it as a part of reality while knowing its delusion was the mystic's only sane option.

*Mêtis* leads the initiate back to the beginning, and its symbol is the circle (Kingsley, 2003). To make the circle without getting lost, we need the help that deception offers. For those who were masters of *mêtis*, they used it to their advantage and as a navigational tool (Kingsley, 2003). Kingsley explains that the "original meaning of the word *logos* had the connotation of words spoken deceitfully" (Kingsley, 2003, p. 130). Adepts like Parmenides and Empedocles could cunningly persuade and bend an inflexible world unlocking the gates and providing access to the source of it all. Such skill differed from what Empedocles called "mortal *mêtis*," and what Kingsley (2003) says is potential never realized (p. 335). Human *mêtis* dictates that a world construed through mortal reason and logic is true. If we subscribe to its appearances, what can set us free becomes our nemesis leaving us perpetually unfulfilled. The irony is that light illuminates in darkness; deception is what allows us to see. This is the wisdom that the pre-Socratics lived and was the basis of their healing tradition.

Empedocles may have been the last of his time to teach through initiatory poetry. The fragments of his writing include not only the nature of the cosmos but of the senses as in this verse that remains of his poetry:

*Come now: watch with every palm how  
each single thing becomes apparent. Don't hold  
anything you see as anymore of an assurance  
than whatever you hear, or give those loud  
sounds you happen to be hearing preference  
over the sharp tastes on your tongue. And don't  
reject the assurance provided by any other limb  
that offers some passage for perception, but  
perceive how each single thing becomes apparent.*

(Kingsley, 2003, p. 507)

Kingsley (2003) explains that Empedocles is indeed talking about our everyday senses. His emphasis on common sense, however, is quite unique. “For Empedocles the discovery of common sense—of that consciousness which is able to hear and see and touch and feel and taste at the same time—was a matter of direct experience” (Kingsley, 2003, p. 514). It meant being aware of everything at once without being captivated or entrapped by any one. To open our palms to the sensate was to become an instrument of *mêtis* (Kingsley, 2003). Watching every thought, sensation, and perception without attachment or control makes it conscious and sees it through to its completion. Kingsley (2003) further explains that *mêtis* asks even more, that we become aware of the power behind our observing, of reality thinking and dreaming itself through us.

The pre-Socratics trusted in deception because of their knowingness of oneness. Kingsley (2003) calls them shape shifters, both gods and humans, who walked consciously within the deception. Their status was not reserved for the privileged or credentialed; it is ingrained within all of humanity. Their teachings were a call to awakening, and *mêtis* was the vehicle for those with the longing and common sense to listen.

### **Epistemological Theme 6: Divine Madness**

The ancients were people of ecstasy, of “divine madness” (Kingsley, 2003). They were immune to the insanity of mortal deception because they could follow the darkness with *mêtis* to its resolute completion. Trusting in madness and putting faith in Strife with

one's whole being opened another world. Here, there exists a broader meaning implicit within healing where there is no rejection or dismissal of any mark of darkness. Kingsley (2003) again makes comparison between divine ecstasy and shamanic states of consciousness. He concludes unequivocally that ancient Greek religion is a shamanic tradition (Kingsley, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2010).

Strife is absolutely destructive. We can either use it, or be used by it. It has the power to dismember us: tear us apart. And yet this is where we have to bear in mind that, not only for shamans but also for the types of mystics and magicians whom we know Empedocles had close contacts with, dismemberment happened to be a recognized form of initiation – of dying while still alive. (Kingsley, 2003, 440)

To approach madness from the intellect only makes us further prone to a destructiveness that renders us, erroneously, as its victims, helpless and at its mercy. To face such pressure and participate consciously with these forces is a choice that calls for the extraordinary; it is the domain of the soul (Kingsley, 2003).

Divine madness was a gift. It drove those inflicted to look within and sink to the roots of all existence that lie in Tartarus (Kingsley, 2003). These mystics shared a commonality in their ability to journey through human madness to the sanity of the underworld. Their sharp focus on the simultaneity of the sensate bridged the physical and spiritual worlds. "To connect this sense-perceived world to that vastness by rooting everything in nothing is automatically to leave everything behind without having to do anything" (Kingsley, 2003, p. 558).

Divine madness was an ecstatic knowing of the shamans of the time. It provided proof and assurance as to the source of ourselves. "The human being is one and the same as the cosmos" (Kingsley, 2003, p. 558). In physicality, we are born into existence while lunacy makes clear "the world has been born in us" (Kingsley, 2003, p. 556). This tradition invited divine madness, as it was indicative of a most practical and logical science of consciousness.

## **Epistemological Theme 7: A Way of Living**

Ancient Greek mysticism was the application of divine law and was a way of life, not just an esoteric practice. It was natural philosophy, an original science. “The observation, collection of data, and organization of knowledge that is characteristic of science was inherited from the magician” (Kingsley, 1995, p. 295). A major difference between natural philosophy and modern science is that the former relies on a direct relationship that proves for the initiate that knowledge does not come from reason and intellect but that it originates in other states of consciousness. For the inexperienced, this was only theory, and the aim of the tradition was to guide others in becoming their own scientists, to make the teachings meaningful, tangible, and useful in life.

Wherever one encounters the phenomenon of esoteric traditions one invariably comes up against the same basic emphasis on the point that it is not ideas or doctrines in themselves that matter, but the ability to discover the reality of these ideas and teachings inside oneself and then make them one’s own. At a theoretical level, this often involves emphasizing that supposedly esoteric ideas about the universe and man are an open secret because true esoteric teaching aims not at filling the disciple or pupil with mere fascinating theories but with providing opportunities for making these ideas and theories real in his own experience.

(Kingsley, 1995, pp. 368–369)

The mystic and the scientist were the same calling, and there was an important aspect about their vocation that cannot be neglected. For those who were the prophets, healers, and lawgivers, it was their job to listen and share whatever wisdom and knowledge was imparted to them in its entirety without the slightest alteration (Kingsley, 1999). They were a voice of the Divine who helped awaken the same power within others.

There are other details that Kingsley (1995) offers about Pythagorean communities; they tended to be small, treated men and women equally, used medicinal herbs, and maintained certain food taboos. Kingsley (1995, 1999) cautions that it was not a way of life based on notions of peaceful sentimentality; there was also a harmonic element to weaponry and war. There was a link between these communal practices and the greater purpose of the tradition. It helped one to prepare for knowing the truth of who we really

are. Kingsley (1999) refers to this lived tradition as “a Parmenidean way of life” (p. 300). Further, Empedocles’ teachings of the cosmos were a map, a blueprint for the embodied soul. In practical terms, the tradition focused on two main areas, healing and lawgiving. Kingsley (1999) explains that the Greek word *physikos* is the origin of physicist as well as physician:

A *physikos* was someone who’s concerned with the basic principles of existence, who’s able to touch the bare bones of what things are—and also use the knowledge that he finds. That’s why it became a normal term for describing magicians and alchemists. (Kingsley, 1999, p. 142)

The *physikos* was concerned with the bigger world behind what has become modern medicine. They understood that like knowledge, healing comes from a different place. There was a connection between healing and law giving because “to give good laws to a city is to heal it” (Kingsley, 1999, p. 215). The healing of people and cities through natural laws of divine union was tied to prophecy. The healers and lawgivers had “the ability to see how justice is carried out in another world” (Kingsley, 1999, p. 33).

Teachers like Parmenides and Empedocles were living examples of what it meant to meet the Divine within our humanness and move between these dimensional worlds. Until we discover that mortal life is but part of an illusion—birth, death, thoughts, perceptions, accomplishments, and struggles—we are bound by the human condition (Kingsley, 1999, 2003). If we approach the realization of our helpless entrapment with great care and rigor, we might touch into the immortality of our being. The most practical aspect of this timeless tradition is “the most precious gift of all—ourselves” (Kingsley, 2003, p. 429). It is our own freedom, where nothing less can truly satiate the soul.

### **Epistemological Theme 8: *Aporia*—Pathlessness**

Socrates was an Athenian Greek philosopher who stood on the threshold of a changing western worldview. He was known for stopping listeners in their tracks, completely dismantling thought and reason, exposing all that is false, and leaving one with absolutely no place to go, nowhere to turn but to the present. “Socrates used to talk about *aporia* or ‘pathlessness,’ about watching every familiar sense of direction vanish” (Kingsley,

2003, p. 154). He insisted we know absolutely nothing at all. Human knowing is not real knowledge but illusionary concepts and projections of the mind. Again and again, this tradition emphasizes that knowledge comes direct from the Divine and is transmitted into physicality through the consciousness of our being.

Within this tradition, all we can do is wait to be taken, for knowledge to find us. With nowhere to go, the only real choice Kingsley (2003) says, is to become conscious. It requires paying attention to the subtleties, markers, and the sometimes-humorous signs along the way. All of our effort, all of our thinking and doing, is to satisfy our longing for true knowledge (Kingsley, 2003). Ironically, this wondering is futile except that it leads to the inevitability of its pointlessness. In his poem, Empedocles elaborates on our predicament:

*Palms—so narrow and closed in— have been  
poured over people's limbs. But countless  
worthless things keep crashing in, blunting their  
cares. During their lifetimes they see such a  
little part of life and then they are off:  
short—lived, flying up and away like smoke,  
totally persuaded by whatever each of them  
happened to bump into while being driven  
one way, another way, all over the place. And they  
claim in vain that they have found the whole.  
Like this, there is no way that people can see or  
hear or consciously grasp the things I have to teach.  
But as for you:  
Because you have come aside here, you will learn.  
Mortal resourcefulness can manage no more.*

(Kingsley, 2003, p. 326)

While human thought and effort might hold true for a world of illusion, they fall apart in a reality where we awaken through the senses and into the sensation of the whole. To the

ancients, an indication that we have arrived is the admittance that our own mortal knowing means nothing at all.

### **Epistemological Theme 9: The Stillness of Motion**

The pre-Socratic tradition was not closed unto the Greek world. It was fluid, changing, and mixed with other traditions. “Pythagoreanism had in its founder a major paradigm for interacting with, borrowing from and contributing to other religious, cosmological, or medical traditions” (Kingsley, 1995, p. 331). Kingsley (1995, 1999, 2003) draws parallels between Pythagoreanism and Hermetism, evidenced by references to journeying into stillness found within Hermetic texts on incubation and also similarities within Gnostic circles. The tradition moved like the wind, scattering itself and reappearing in various forms throughout the ancient world.

Originally Pythagoreans weren’t so concerned with fixed ideas or doctrines as they were with something quite different: something that didn’t just tolerate creativity and originality but encouraged them, nurtured them, guided people to their source. This is why the Pythagorean tradition managed to stay so elusive—why it was so open-ended, blending with other traditions, defying our modern ideas of orthodoxy or self-definition. (Kingsley, 1999, p. 154)

Within this motion and continuity, however, there also existed its opposite, and nothing less confusing can be expected from a tradition based on contradictions. Despite its fluidity, the essence of the tradition centered on a unique relationship between motion and motionlessness, of traveling in total stillness.

Incubation was a journey from, through, and into silence and stillness where repetitive circular movements and the sound of piping and hissing were indicative of entering another state of consciousness (Kingsley, 1999, 2003). If fortunate, it carried one to meet the unfathomable, the stillness of death itself. If one had the courage to not only face death but also remain aware and comfortable within the darkness, motion and stillness completed themselves in a boundless circle where all illusions of separateness became whole.

“Stillness means neither being drawn into the illusions nor trying to escape them. It means that when trapped, we are free” (Kingsley, 2003, p. 473). If, in human fashion, we continue trying to think our way through what “is” and “is not,” we further delude and entrench ourselves. Kingsley (1999) warns that we risk what is most precious of all, the gift of life behind what we think is real. Those like Parmenides and Empedocles, through the language of initiation, oracles, and riddles, beckon us into stillness to experience everything for which we yearn.

### **Epistemological Theme 10: The Oneness of Everything**

Parmenides describes meeting the goddess of the underworld, who in his poem remains nameless. This may be because she is a “death goddess” whose true name was considered to be potentially dangerous to oneself to utter. As previously discussed in this chapter, Kingsley (1999, 2003) identifies the goddess as Persephone of Tartarus. She describes two roads, two very different paths of inquiry. The path “that is, and is not possible not to be,” the goddess calls the way of persuasion. Along this route, absolutely everything exists and is included. It is the one we might hastily choose until our reasoning balks at the implications. Everything we think must exist because there is nothing that does not, from one extreme to another, every thought and imagining. The other road “that is not” is the place of nothingness, of non-existence, the world from which Parmenides paradoxically returns as a voice of the goddess:

From the one place from where no knowledge returns, he is about to bring back the ultimate knowledge contained in his famous poem. Parmenides, the messenger, is coming back to the world of the living while still alive with news from where no news is ever supposed to come. (Kingsley, 2003, p. 65)

The goddess, however, quickly dismisses this second path because what “is not” is unrecognizable, cannot be traveled, or named. Kingsley (2003) spends pages unraveling this riddle that is befuddling and elusive when one tries to rationalize and make sense of the goddess’ words, which are meant instead to be an initiation into the Mysteries. He cautions us to stay alert to the subtleties within the poem.



The goddess says that these two roads “exist for thinking.” When we think in terms of one or the other, this or that, we are bound by what makes them separate. The key, Kingsley (2003) asserts, rests with the line “For what exists for thinking, and being, are one and the same” (p. 70). Thought simply verifies what already exists. Kingsley (2003) explains that, “anything you can think about has to exist for you to think about it” (p. 71). Every thought, regardless of whether we consider it good or bad, right or wrong, desired or feared, must exist for our thinking of it. This logic is illogical to the rational mind. It means as the goddess implies that thought itself is incomplete, that it alone it is an instrument of separation, and that there is a particular unified relationship between thinking and being. The goddess suggests a third way, an inevitable alternative—the birth-less/death-less, all encompassing, ever continuous, and still now.

This ancient Greek tradition grew an awareness that put an end to any notion of separation. Kingsley (2003) challenges us to further consider the natural law of everything. Such completeness is so terrifying; it stops us in our tracks and demands we see the truth of who we are. The acceptance that everything is divine requires actively participating in the present moment reality of the universe, “a cosmic obligation,”—returning every thought to its source (Kingsley, 2003, p. 468). Accordingly, our primary purpose and responsibility is to be conscious and present to Awareness moving through us. The voices of the past, the *Iatromantis* healers of Apollo, did not leave behind teachings per se but “a completely natural process of unlearning all the things we believed we had learned until we are left with nothing but the naked reality of ourselves as we always have been, as we always will be” (Kingsley, 2003, p. 476). According to these lovers of wisdom, logic is an original science of the oneness of everything.

## Reflections

The idea to review Kingsley’s voluminous work through epistemological themes comes from indigenous authors who are addressing the critical need of articulating and advancing traditional knowledge and Native ways of knowing for local communities and into the present-day global society. Indigenous scholars and allies are bringing forward their knowledge, philosophies, and epistemologies within the academy to reclaim, offer,

and safeguard it through the very mechanisms that have sought to eradicate it. It is appropriate and perhaps even necessary, then, that an ancient epistemology of the West, such as the pre-Socratics, that has also been silenced might find its way back by learning from indigenous frameworks and methodologies as they become more visible and influential within the curriculum.

Even in the best of circumstances, it is no easy task to condense any spiritually based tradition and its meanings into an academic format using English as the medium to convey the essence of the non-conceptual. Any misinterpretations in this writing are due to my error, and it is my intent to present Kingsley's words so as not to alter or confuse their meaning or add yet another layer to the illusion and further distort this tradition.

In addition to his four major works on ancient Greek mysticism and philosophy, Kingsley has authored numerous articles, given interviews, and presented in the United States and abroad (Bamford & Kisly, 2006; Kingsley, 1997, 2004, 2008, 2009; Kingsley & Kingsley, 2006; Mohrhoff, 2007; Munnis, n.d.; Smoley, 2011; Whittaker, 2010, 2011). I have immersed myself in his texts and articles, listened to his recordings, and spoken with him from Europe. I have read a number of reviews and reactions to his material (Brewer, 2006–2007; Bussanich, 1997, n.d.; Shapero, 2001; Shaw, 2004; Steinberg, 2010a, 2010b). The culmination of my study is the strong realization that intellectualization and philosophizing will never make known an epistemology based on a way of being. The longing for something more makes obvious what is missing within western frameworks of learning. The unification of western and indigenous knowledge and epistemologies at their place of timeless intersection and connection is critical to our future. When science works in concert with ancient philosophy, knowledge, and wisdom, there is no limit to its discoveries and solutions that are otherwise unimaginable.

As I have read and reread Kingsley's work, there are several issues I continue to reflect upon. For one, it is enticing to claim this Orphic-Pythagorean, pre-Socratic tradition as one of the West's own indigenous-based practices. This is not meant to appropriate Indigenous peoples' knowledge and ways of knowing. Instead, this chapter shows it is indeed an apt description for this primordial, mystery tradition of the archaic and classical Greek periods—one strand of the western knowledge stream that is particularly relevant

because its subsequent alteration has profoundly influenced the West, namely the current scientific, dualistic, and materialistic worldview which has spread to every corner of the globe at the expense of indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing.

The mysteries are typically conveyed through cultural myths, narratives, and stories, not through thought and analysis. Throughout history, however, people have turned spiritual teachings into religious dogma for followers. In the case of the pre-Socratics, followers may also succumb to such tendencies turning this tradition into doctrine that relies on the steps of incubation and common sense to achieve healing and wisdom. The practices are formalized, and one believes if followed will lead to the goddess of the underworld, the place of knowledge, healing, and natural law. In this dogmatic rendition, the men of Apollo sit upon their thrones while their disciples aspire toward such mastery, and the priestesses are absent or at least never mentioned. These possible distortions are due to human confusion and patterning. The West debates the details, breaks and spread apart to make what we think right our own, just like an elite Athenian circle did with an ancient Greek tradition. These reactions often stem from issues of perceived justice and injustice and distract from fundamental truths, which create stronger divisions and divisive illusions as illustrated later in the rise of the western worldview.

Western society need be careful not to do this here as well. For example, Kingsley emphasizes that this tradition focuses on the descent and that the depths of the divine have been severed and severely abused in favor of the ascent. We, however, cannot make a similar error in favoring the fall over journeying to the sun, moon, and stars. This is not to question the primordial, feminine essence of this tradition. We have done a great disservice by dismissing the wisdom of the dark. This simply suggests that when we open with complete abandon to the oneness of the dark and light, it seems irrelevant how or in what direction we are carried.

The West's lost-ness is evident in the increased interest in other spiritual traditions, particularly in Eastern and American Indian practices. Kingsley cautions that we need to find what we are missing at the roots of western civilization. This is essential, and yet the whole of western society's identity does not rest with ancient Greece either. There are other indigenous-based and mystery traditions that come from the West that share

commonalities with the tenets of ancient philosophy, Eastern mysticism, Native science, and many spiritual paths. It is critical though that the West knows its spiritual center so that it no longer seeks fulfillment through the identity of others. When secure, it seems to make no difference what practices we might choose.

Kingsley makes a strong case for a shamanic tradition that came out of the East and that was seeded in the heart of the West. He portrays the *Iatromantis* of the ancient world as genuine practitioners of the Divine. History shows, however, a seductive tendency for some to use magical powers for selfish gain and manipulation. Kingsley (2010) exposes this corruption where least expected: at the root of Tibetan Buddhism that he says destroyed its shamanic heritage with the overlay of a tradition based on compassion. A fateful alliance between a Mongolian great Khan and Tibetan monk purposely turned the powers of the shamanic tradition onto itself in an effort to eradicate its practitioners and usher in the new spiritual leader of Lhasa, the Dalai Lama (Kingsley, 2010). Both religion, even in a most benign form, and formal education have contributed toward the erasure of a shamanic way of knowing, where knowledge arises into the physical through merging with the spirit or essence of existence.

Kingsley (2010) further challenges our assumptions with his references to Genghis Khan and Weatherford's (2004) research of a hidden perspective of the Mongol warrior and his reign of terror. Accordingly, the Mongol people, monks, and lamas revere Genghis Khan as a ruthless spiritual leader who used the shamanic arts to conquer the warring tribal factions of the Mongolian steppe and then to confront those armies outside who enslaved the nomads, amassing with lightning precision and efficiency the largest empire in history and one that offered religious freedom, the dismantling of aristocratic privilege, and the establishment of the highest law of the Eternal Blue Sky (Weatherford, 2004). These examples suggest that shamanic traditions indeed carry a destructive force that has been used not only to eradicate its traces but also for balancing what is askew.

My greatest discomfort is not with this revisionary history that requires a shift from our assumed perspectives and frameworks of reference. It is with one particular line in *Reality*, which I inquired about with Kingsley. It is the way in which he compares the

Phocaeans, a direct lineage of the pre-Socratic mystery tradition, to Indigenous peoples of the Americas:

In the old days, most people were quite open about rejecting the Phocaeans out of hand, and yet, as the North American Indians have come to know only too well, acceptance is what tends to conceal the bitterest end. (Kingsley, 2003, p. 266)

While such subtlety and sarcasm is in keeping with Kingsley's style, within this context I am uncomfortable with its usage. My discomfort is with the word "acceptance." Given our lack of ownership of the calculated genocide that has transpired on these lands of the Americas and the forgetting of an ancient spirit of the western worldview, in this matter, we cannot be left to our abilities to read between the lines as Kingsley intends for us to do. Yes, the West needed to accept Native peoples, but here it is necessary to be very clear. Our ancestors were visitors on foreign and inhabited lands, and we needed Native peoples' acceptance to live in and share their territories. The issue, of course, is that our ancestors did not come as allies but as colonizers with ulterior motives. This deception continues to be largely ignored and understated particularly within the United States. This is not to criticize Kingsley, a man credited with recovering a sacred heritage of western civilization, but to admit straightforwardly to our blindness that results from the forgetting of the West's indigenous-based traditions.

Kingsley continues to educate about the identity of western civilization. Before his entry, accurate interpretations of the pre-Socratics who inquired below the surface were few and sporadic within the literature. There is no parallel to Kingsley's explosion onto the pre-Socratic scene. He has come to know these mystical philosophers not just through academic scholarship and rigor but also through a direct participation with the tradition and its epistemology. Ruiz (2007) describes Kingsley's approach toward Parmenides and Empedocles as "utterly novel" (p. xvi). While Kingsley's intimate and firsthand experience is certainly unique within western frameworks and methodologies, it finds great company within Native circles. The work of indigenous scholars, past and present (Deloria, 2012; Duran, 2013; Kawagley, 2006) make this research inquiry possible, even pointing the way to its inevitability—to the comparison of pre-Socratic and indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing to connect these pieces of our respective stories.

## Chapter 5

### Ancient Greek Mysticism Meets Indigenous Ways of Knowing

#### **A Common Vision**

The previous chapter introduced ancient Greek mysticism and outlined the most detailed pre-Socratic epistemology extant within the literature of an obscure tradition at the roots of western civilization. Having established that foundation, the purpose now of comparing Kingsley's pre-Socratic exposition with Native ways of knowing is to show in what ways ancient western and indigenous epistemologies are at their root fundamentally similar while providing equally for the cultural expressions found within each knowledge stream. Kingsley's revisionary scholarship of the pre-Socratics provides new insights that now make this comparison possible. It is also noteworthy to mention that it is the research and deep understanding of one author of a particular circle of pre-Socratic masters that is being compared, most generally, to the indigenous knowledge of hundreds of communities of Native peoples, many who still embrace their traditions.

Having outlined the epistemological themes of this ancient Greek era, this chapter continues to address the first research question; in what ways is the pre-Socratic tradition and epistemology of the Archaic and Classical Greek periods, as detailed by iconoclastic scholar Peter Kingsley, fundamentally similar to American Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing? An extensive rationale for the reliance on Kingsley is provided in the introduction of the last chapter. There are two points to emphasize here that further strengthen the case for this comparison. First, there is virtually no agreement between classical scholars on their interpretations of the pre-Socratics. Kingsley, drawing from many disparate opinions of numerous scholars, seems to have broken the code of the elusive pre-Socratics. He couples scholarly tenacity with a more indigenous way of knowing that blends the two methodologies to provide fuller meaning to what has previously been unavailable within the discipline of western philosophy alone. Second, the life work and contributions of three Native contemporary visionaries suggest the need for this comparison: the late Oscar Angayuqaq Kawagley, the late Vine Deloria, and Phillip Duran. Individually, they focus through their respective areas of expertise in advancing

Native knowledge, education, histories, science, etc., while at the same time, each has been passionate about seeking common ground between western and indigenous worldviews. Together, these four authors—Kingsley, Kawagley, Deloria, and Duran—allow for an authentic discussion about the underlying similarities between ancient western philosophy and science and indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing.

### **Oscar Angayuqaq Kawagley—Spirit and Knowledge**

Kawagley (2006, n.d.), who has been cited several times earlier in this writing related to his lived experience of a Yupiaq worldview, worked closely with colleague Raymond Barnhardt to bring attention to critical issues in furthering Alaska Native education (Barnhardt & Kawagley; 2010, 2011). Together, they advocated for moving indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing from the periphery into the mainstream and have helped to initiate a steadily emerging paradigm shift within education based on the integrity of Native knowledge systems deeply rooted in place. Kawagley (2006) also joined with Cajete (2000) in articulating a genre of indigenous science contributing an Alaska Native perspective that contains within it distinct ways of viewing the world and the universe.

Earlier in this dissertation, the literature review discussed Native worldviews, knowledge, and ways of knowing, and as we continue to delve beneath the surface, Kawagley (2001) leads further, using nature, metaphor, and imagery to teach through an indigenous methodology. He speaks to the Yupiit, other Native peoples, and the world at large; it is the message of the loon imbued with epistemological, ontological, and axiological meaning:

The cry of the loon is mysterious, it is mournful, and it is remembering place all at the same time. The call of the loon is God-given. It has its own language and is understood by others of its kind and other creatures. Only we, with the ability to think and rationalize, do not understand, because we listen only with the mind, not with the mind and the heart, sprinkled with intuition.

The loon has never lost its spiritual vision. It has a love for life, its environment and its creator. Its education is from Mother Earth, for the heart, so it

can become creative and live in its community, its habitat. The loon still gets messages from its unconscious with new thoughts or solutions to problems, whereas we human beings have covered up our unconscious minds with information and rational thinking.

Whereas the loon looks into its inner ecology, knowing that no one else can do that for it. It knows that it is incumbent on itself. For us to receive guidance and direction for our lives, we must relearn what the loon does naturally.

The loon develops the loon worldview of its young by remaining closely connected to others and its place. As it migrates from place to place, it remembers and appreciates the diversity and beauty of nature. It nurtures its offspring to become independent, yet knowing its dependence on the abundance of nature to meet its needs. It teaches its young to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This is true love.

The loon's cry is a remembering of place that is harmonious, full of beauty and diversity which nature so loves. This is heart talk. This is science, knowing place. (Kawagley, 2001, pp. 108-109)

While there has been a focus on differentiating the salient characteristics of western science and indigenous knowledge in the literature, there has also been a concerted effort to examine where they intersect and converge (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005). The most notable similarities, however, generate not from the dominant paradigm but from an emerging western science based on quantum theory (Capra, 2010; Duran, 2013; Goswami, 1995, 2012), holographic principles (Bohm, 2005; Pribram, 2013; Talbot, 2011), Gaia Theory (Lovelock, 2000), and the interrelatedness of living systems through consciousness and spirit (Capra, 1997; Sahtouris, 2000). This “new science” only confirms what Indigenous peoples have long known, practiced, conveyed, and celebrated through Native languages and traditions—a sophisticated knowledge of an interrelated and spirited world and cosmology. Despite these points of intersection, as a visionary who bridged western and indigenous knowledge systems within education, Kawagley must have felt much frustration in his lifetime as this “new science” even today sits at the margins of an entrenched paradigm disallowing any true complimentary relationship to exist. Also, an



issue that arises from their similarities is the critical need to show where these epistemological underpinnings were once found within a living tradition of the West prior to the more recent stirring of an awakening science.

### **Phillip Duran—A New Science Worldview**

In search of a “new science worldview,” Phillip Duran (2013), a Tigua Elder and physicist, is one of the rare few to explain how the ancestors of western science and Indigenous peoples were once more similar than the contrast of their separation indicates today. Not only is Duran (2013) the only known indigenous scholar to reference the work of Kingsley, he provides an overview of the history of western science from the Pre-Socratics through the 20<sup>th</sup> century drawing parallels between natural philosophy and mysticism, indigenous knowledge and science, and quantum theory and physics. With his brilliant accomplishment of such a daunting task, it seems that the job has been done, the main purpose of this project and far beyond well achieved. Reading *The Condor and the Eagle: Uniting Heart and Mind in Search of a New Science Worldview* affirmed that this research trail was well worth following. Duran’s (2013) book is not only encouraging; it lends credibility to this work. It confirms that in the search for wellness, there is more of the western story to retell in order to unify with indigenous ways of knowing and an epistemology also evidenced within an inner science and natural philosophy of ancient Greek civilization, the precursor to the dominant paradigm.

As both Tigua and physicist, Duran provides an in-depth analysis of the ways in which quantum theory and modern physics corroborate long-held indigenous knowledge, while his central message points to a broader connection between the West and Indigenous peoples.

It is also significant that some of the early Greek masters of wisdom acknowledged and taught that nature is alive and endowed with spirituality—a belief also held by Indigenous peoples. From these evidences it can be inferred that nature is pointing to a holistic path, which the West abandoned long ago. Modern physics is not that path; it is the tool which nature has used in pointing the West to a path already followed by Indigenous peoples. (Duran, 2013, p. xxv)

Duran (2013) touches upon the similarities between the knowledge of the pre-Socratics and Indigenous peoples, and it is essential that such confirmation come from a Native scholar and Elder. Although American Indigenous traditions are in various places of revitalization, they are rooted in these lands that now comprise the Americas and are closer to the surface than this western tradition that is all but extinct and further removed. Duran's (2013) comparison of pre-Socratic and indigenous cosmologies is highly significant, and this chapter relies upon his insights as it highlights the commonalities existent beneath the surface of what have become two divergent epistemologies.

### **Vine Deloria, Jr.—A New Metaphysics**

Lastly, a most significant author to mention is Vine Deloria of French and Oglala Lakota heritage—renowned historian, theologian, and activist—who has also been cited several times earlier but who needs to be introduced here along with Kawagley and Duran. The New York Times in their tribute to Deloria referred to him as a “champion of Indian rights” and “one of the most outspoken—and persuasive—proponents of Indian cultural and political identity” (Johnson, 2005, n.p.). Although he wrote a collection of classics, it is one of his earliest published in 2006, *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence*, that left Deloria troubled because it was the least read and understood according to Daniel R. Wildcat in the forward to the 2012 reprinted edition. Not only was Deloria (2012) one of the first to provide an indigenous perspective on modern-day metaphysics, he used an interdisciplinary approach to integrate a complex and unified knowledge of existence (loc. 83). Wildcat reminds readers that this was well before the academy offered interdisciplinary study, which still does not garner as much credibility as does specialization, though this is changing. In this volume, Deloria (2012) advocated for the need to discover the hidden relationships between all human traditions with the onus resting heavily with the modern-day West, as a unified epistemology is not new to indigenous cosmologies and experience.

Deloria (2012) like Duran (2013) also references a western tradition reaching back to the time of Socrates when the approach to knowledge was akin to a unified way of experiencing the world. He describes the philosopher as “looking for a cohesive

explanation of knowledge and experience and conducting his search in a practical and synthetic manner (Deloria, 2012, p. 7). *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* is an extremely helpful text in exploring the similarities behind the scenes of seemingly opposite worldviews. While Duran (2013) seeks to find a “new science worldview,” Deloria (2012), in his vision to reunify science and theology, suggested “the creation of a new metaphysical description of experience,” one “independent of the insights of any particular branch of knowledge but intimately related to all of them” (pp. 22-24). Using the language of metaphysics, consciousness, and modern physics, Deloria, Kawagley, and Duran link western and indigenous epistemologies in the search for universal meaning.

Toward this understanding, Deloria (2012) quotes the 1930 Swedish Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nathan Söderblom who described the seventh century BCE as the broadest and most unified period in human history:

The time was a remarkable one. Great things occurred in the world of the Spirit during those centuries. Kon-fu-tse summarized the wisdom of China in reverence towards Heaven and antiquity. His older contemporary Lao-Tse showed the way to quiet goodness and peace of mind. On the banks of the Neranjara there rose up in the soul of Siddhartha the way of deliverance from the woe of existence and the attainment of Nirvana. Before him Vardhamana had sought to “overcome” by means of a severe ascetic life. From other mysterious sources came salvation by Bhakti, devotion to a personal divinity. Among the Jews appeared the great prophets and their writings. The gloomy solitary at Ephesus, Heraclitus, expounded his doctrine. In southern Italy, Pythagoras gathered an intimate band of hearers to hear his speculations and his ascetic ideals. There also, the bold rhapsodist, Xenophanes, spent the greater part of his life. In Sicily the seer Empedocles proclaimed his own divinity; he was himself a god. (Deloria, 2012, p. 297)

Deloria (2012) not only offers a linkage between indigenous cosmologies and such spiritual and mystical traditions but goes further to propose that the next leap for humanity is to bring together all facets of knowledge into a unified whole (p. 64). Toward that vision, this

chapter seeks to further bridge and heal one of the deepest divides within human knowledge, a violation of both indigenous and western epistemologies.

### **Clarifying Terms and Usage**

In moving forward, it is helpful to further clarify some of the terms that this research has used in introducing this story thus far. In reference to the pre-Socratics as detailed by Kingsley (1995, 1999, 2003, 2010), these early philosophers are called ancient Greek mystics. The word *ancient* distinguishes the time period that in the literature spans the archaic (750–500 BCE) and into the classical (500–336 BCE) era. Not only is *ancient* inclusive of both periods, it stretches back into earlier times of Greek history. The word *ancient* is a bit misleading when comparing the pre-Socratic tradition with indigenous knowledge, which is not contained within a historical timeframe. This is not to say that the Orphic-Pythagorean and pre-Socratic tradition does not also reach back into antiquity, only that this exploration is situated 2,500 years ago.

The previous chapter began with an introduction to ancient Greek mysticism. The terms *mysticism* and *spirituality* are grayer than clear, and although often used synonymously with religion are quite different from the orthodox reference to a specifically organized system of belief. It is obvious that neither ancient Greek mysticism nor Native spirituality is *religion* in the conventional sense of the word. Deloria (2012) uses the language of *metaphysics*, perhaps because of its connection with western philosophy from the pre-Socratic to the modern era. He also contends there is need to find a common and unifying language that privileges no one tradition over another. Whatever the language, it is one not in opposition to science or theology but is a union of all phenomena.

Thus far, this writing has referred to the pre-Socratic masters as mystics, prophets, healers, priests, and shamans, and we might as well mention magicians and sorcerers to be inclusive. These titles neither mean the same nor are they mutually exclusive. It is reminiscent of the story of the Lakota *medicine men* in Chapter 2 who were at a loss as to how to refer to themselves since they had different areas of specialty and ways in which they worked. The pre-Socratics were *Iatromantis*, and as with indigenous languages, much is lost in translation. English is not the medium of these original teachings and so

oversimplifies the meaning of such complex phenomena. According to Ruiz (2007), his reference to Heraclitus as a mystic in same vein as Parmenides and Empedocles “situated him within a much wider matrix of philosophy as a path of life leading to divinization which itself existed in a world where mystical life included and at times blended magic, shamanism, initiation and mysteries” (p. 123).

The original meaning of science is knowledge. *Epistēmē* is the Greek word for knowledge or science and derives from the verb *to know*. The word *epistemology* etymologically originates from *epistēmē* and is the study of knowledge—what knowledge is and how it is acquired. It is relevant that the derivation of *epistemology* is from both noun and verb translations of ancient Greek. Similarly, the term *indigenous ways of knowing* carries both parts of speech so conveys the closest approximation in meaning in English. When discussing the pre-Socratic epistemological themes outlined in Chapter 4, it is obvious we are talking about both a body of knowledge and an active process of learning, as with indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing. Bearing in mind the haziness of these elusive terms that defy compartmentalization, we continue with this comparison of blended meanings.

## **Below the Surface**

The growing research documenting indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing makes possible the consideration of Orphic-Pythagorean and pre-Socratic philosophy as an indigenous-based tradition lived through its original teachings. Any consideration of its similarities with American Indigenous epistemologies must be an exploration below the surface of the diversely complex cultural expressions and identity of any one group. No two indigenous worldviews are identical as traditions, languages, knowing, values, and histories connected with place shape each individually. Native America is home to hundreds of indigenous cultures, and so there are multiple worldviews. Embedded within are multi-layered epistemologies imbued with meaning; they are unique and fluid while pointing to the universal and having timeless value as evidenced in the writings of Drabek (2012a), John (2010), and Meyer (2001, 2008) reviewed in Chapter 2.

This inquiry does not focus on the cultural differences between pre-Socratic and indigenous epistemologies, but instead on their fundamental and general unity. Unfortunately there is little known about the specific everyday customs of pre-Socratic communities, but the esoteric and hidden aspects are resurfacing. It is here that this research seeks to connect with American Indigenous epistemologies so that together the essence of both might be strengthened and carried forward. It is this fundamental condition of holism and interrelatedness that by its very nature is indicative of a commonality out of which the question of universality arises. This section considers four major places suggestive of such intersection: Oral Traditions of Transmission, The Primacy of Nature, *To Know*, and A Unified Universe.

### **Oral Traditions of Transmission**

The orally transmitted pre-Socratic tradition of the seventh through fifth centuries BCE existed at the cusp of a burgeoning literary Greek culture. The fragments of initiatory and incantatory poetry containing myth, metaphor, and natural symbolism that have confused most are all that exist. Little is known but few details of how the tradition passed through these small circles before its quick disappearance into the western worldview. It is significant, though, that it was an oral tradition whose transmission guided others in the direct experience of living as a divine human being. Although oral traditions have been virtually lost to western society, indigenous cultures bring insight to the meaningfulness of this shared trademark and its relevancy and necessity today.

Common to Native peoples across the Americas, stories are a cornerstone and pedagogical approach to knowledge acquisition (Archibald, 2008; Bruchac, 2003; Drabek, 2012a; Kawagley, 1999). Drabek (2012a) and John (2009) both guide readers through the complex and integral role that stories play within their local Native communities of Kodiak and Nelson Island, Alaska. In both Alutiiq and Yup'ik traditions, there exist different categories of stories that have distinct purposes and some that require certain times, seasons, storytellers [i.e. "distinguished Indigenous Elders, parents, grandparents, shamans, cultural educators" (John, 2009, p. 57)] meaningful artifacts, song, dance, and gestures for sharing. Within the Alutiiq ancestral tradition, there are *unigkuat*, myths and

legends of great spiritual significance, and *quliyanguat*, all other true-life stories that little birds carry connecting the spirit world of animals with humans, (Drabek, 2012a, pp. 10-11). The Yupiit transmit knowledge through *qanruyutet* (advice), *qulirat* (ancient narratives) and *qanemcit* (personal accounts), a fundamental developmental process of accessing and utilizing a system of traditional knowledge that guides people in acquiring consciousness and awareness (John, 2009, p. 61). Both authors make evident the sophistication of their oral traditions, the importance of situating them within a lived context, and the significance of the role of Elders in the acquisition and transmittal of traditional knowledge.

Drabek (2012a) explains that the effects of colonization, including the shift to a Christian theology and western educational system, that has loosely translated, appropriated, suppressed, and eradicated oral traditions has jeopardized generations of ancestral knowledge; there is a silence where traditional stories once connected the *Alutiit* with their identity, values, and wellbeing (pp. 13-14). Despite the plundering of indigenous stories and as a testament to their resiliency, these accounts are far more detailed than the little known about the pre-Socratics and point to an essential connectivity that oral traditions in general afford their members and the critical need for their continuance.

The reference to indigenous narratives as myths, legends, even stories is pejorative because these terms are value-laden and suggest the inferiority of something not based on rationality and fact. To the pre-Socratics this would actually indicate their sensibility, as myth, poetry, and metaphor provided a means for conveying what thinking alone is difficult to grasp. Kawagley (2006) explains that from a Yupiaq worldview, myths serve a greater purpose of teaching what it means to be a “real human being.” Parmenides and Empedocles might agree and add that in their time and place this meant living as a *daimôn*, a divine being, a fundamental and natural condition common to all aspects of existence linking matter and spirit throughout the cosmos.

Indigenous languages often do not translate easily into English, but they do share a similarity with ancient Greek; a single word or phrase can contain an entire body of knowledge as with the examples above. Bruchac (2003) notes, when American Indians speak English, they infuse it with nuances characteristic within indigenous languages. For

instance, whether in English or their Native tongue, indigenous language speakers often “differentiate between what they know from personal experience, what is general knowledge, and what has been reported by someone else” (Bruchac, 2003, loc. 264). While this may not be the custom of ancient Greek speakers, it is interesting to consider that in the pre-Socratic oral tradition of the *Iatromantis*, orators such as Parmenides appear to span all three possibilities. Parmenides spoke from personal experience relaying the knowledge imparted to him through merging his consciousness with the Divine appearing to him as a goddess.

Even more, the story of the seeding of western civilization is commensurate with the otherworldly dimensions indicative of indigenous creation narratives of the Maya, Coast Salish, Inuit, Abeneki, Hopi, etc. *In a Story Waiting to Pierce You*, Abaris passes his arrow to Pythagoras transferring the knowledge to an incarnation of Apollo. The arrow carries not only the story but also the essence of an entire tradition. The view that objects are imbued with spirit and power is not an unordinary motif in indigenous cultures and is an inherent quality in animistic worldviews. Drabek (2012a) explains that within the Alutiiq ancestral tradition, “stories are also embodied within cultural objects of stone, wood, bone, and textiles” (p. 13). Such powerful objects transmit what oral renditions alone cannot always convey. Both contain meaning and symbolism significant for carrying forward indigenous and pre-Socratic worldviews.

Most practically, oral traditions contribute toward healing and wellbeing. Although we will discuss the meaning of these terms relevant to deconstructing the western paradigm later in chapter 8, here we need link wellness with the reclamation of indigenous stories and oral traditions. From communities to schools to an applied methodology in academia (Archibald, 2008), storytelling from indigenous perspectives is a vehicle for educating, healing, and social change.

As the story’s intensity and messages radiate outward, storytelling can become a healing process, both for storytellers and their audience, reinforcing our sense of identity and belonging to our identifying group-building unity, wellbeing and a sense of purpose or meaning to life. These ripples move outward further, carrying the power to correct history, stopping inaccuracies or untruths from being passed



on, which is particularly important for Indigenous people whose histories previously were told by their conquerors. Then in a larger sense, stories seek to empower a community, becoming tools for reclaiming lost traditions or lands, and validating actions within the community's lived context. In essence they function as change agents, offering a means to draw attention to and address inequities of power or oppression. (Drabek, 2012a, p. 15)

From the practical to the mystical, both aspects are vital when exploring beneath the surface of indigenous and pre-Socratic epistemologies where the power of oral knowledge and its transmission is common to both and highly relevant in healing an erroneous divide between two worldviews.

### **The Primacy of Nature**

The oral traditions of Native peoples comprise multidimensional bodies of knowledge and teachings that center around the relationships between the human, natural, and spiritual worlds and are intimately connected with place. Bruchac (2003) writes, "American Indian cultures as a whole have been deeply connected to nature, not just through language but through custom, tradition, ceremony, and—even more important—self awareness" (loc. 309). There is a bond with nature that elevates all of life to its inseparable union. It allows for humans' personal involvement with a Living God (Deloria, 2012, p. 42). Nature provides simultaneously for physical survival and the developmental and psychological processes of consciousness and awareness (John, 2009). It is not an object of religious worship, but rather there is a reverence for the force behind nature of which humans are apart and no higher than any of its manifestations.

The teachings of the pre-Socratics also point to the primacy of nature. In Greek, *physica* means "the natural things," but nature was not objectified; it was emblematic of an inner knowledge and natural science strongly connected with the *kosmos*. According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, "Pythagoras is said to have been the first to apply this word to 'the universe,' perhaps originally meaning 'the starry firmament,' but later it was extended to the whole physical world, including the earth." This was a tradition tied to a natural philosophy where one's relationship with the subtleties of nature engendered individual

consciousness and ultimately a unified awareness with the Divine knowing itself through the human. References to this inner process are made in the context of agriculture, of growing and cultivating the soil of the mind and waiting for the Divine to open within our humanity (Kingsley, 1995, 1999). Returning home was the purpose of knowledge, science, and nature, proving not through belief or theory, but directly, one's unequivocal obligation to a cosmic order and its cycles of renewal.

For Native cultures, land is an important value—not materially but ethically (Bruchac, 2003; Deloria, 2012; Duran, 2013; Kawagley, 2006). It is not a concept but rather a “force field” (Deloria, 2012, p. 203). It is alive and conscious, and such energy is imbued throughout the natural world. Kawagley writes, “The Yupiaq people live in an aware world. Wherever they go they are amongst spirits of their ancestors, as well as those of the animals, plants, hills, winds, lakes and rivers.” All of nature is a related social entity where interrelatedness is a “mutual obligation as relatives” (Duran, 2013, p. 21). Animals and plants feed and provide for the necessities of a subsistence lifestyle where humans respect, are nourished by, and learn from the spirit and intelligence of their non-human relatives. It is inconceivable and damaging to separate these worlds. The physical world arises from the energy of the invisible. Duran (2013) uses an example from the Haudenosaunee to explain:

A blade of grass, they say, is an energy form manifested in matter—grass matter. The spirit of the grass is that unseen force which produces the species of grass, and it is manifest to us in the form of real grass. (p. 83)

This analogy, of course, pertains to all of nature that is never separated from spirit.

Traditionally, knowledge comes from observing and communicating with nature through what John (2009) describes as “shared senses” and an understanding of the relationships between the various realms of existence (p. 60). A heightened quality of sensory perception both tangible and ethereal allows for all aspects of traditional life: the harvesting of caribou, moose, deer, and fish for sustenance, clothes, and tools, recognizing what plants to use for medicinal purposes, predicting weather patterns to ensure safety, knowing the cycles that govern the gathering of foods, navigating the waters by the night sky, etc. This is the thread that connects indigenous traditions of the world. Bruchac (2003) writes, “It was more as if we were owned by the land and were cared for by it” (loc. 246). In

a most natural sense, traditional Native ways of life are practical, mystical, and spiritual.

While Native peoples place particular importance on their relationship with the land, the pre-Socratics were bonded with the *kosmos*, different expressions of an inclusive natural design. Indigenous peoples by the very definition of the word are the first inhabitants of a particular place and have ancestral, cultural, and linguistic ties to its changing landscape. Importantly, Duran (2013) states, “Their [indigenous] stories tell about migrations, but they have no memory of immigrating to this land” (p. 16). The homelands of the pre-Socratics were in ancient Greece, Anatolia, and the islands of the Mediterranean. They were known for migrating to other lands. They were colonizers, often in the true sense of the word, establishing permanent homes in places that conflicted with local, Indigenous peoples. Certain pre-Socratic mystics, however, particularly the communities of Pythagoras and Parmenides, were also colonizers in an ancient sense of the word, following an inner god to grow their tradition in harmony with their surroundings. Although this epistemological responsibility has been grossly abandoned by western modernity, within a forgotten place of similarity with indigenous traditions, one’s respectful relationship with nature is primary.

### ***To Know***

It is challenging to find neutral language that does not offend or perpetuate mistrust to describe the similarities between pre-Socratic and indigenous ways of knowing that this next section attempts to address. *To know* is terminology common to both. Ironically it is also the root of the controversial term *shaman* that spread to the West through Russian translation, which has its origins in the proposed Altaic language family of Eurasia and also connects with Sanskrit and Pali—both Indo-Aryan languages that are part of the larger Indo-European language family. The pre-Socratic lineage indicates an overlooked and silenced connection existent between Buddhism and Asiatic shamanic traditions. *A Story Waiting to Pierce You* suggests this is not simply an oversight but a deliberate disassociation as the power of corruption finds its way into the most compassionate of world religions. By linking the Hyperborean Abaris with Pythagoras’ Apollo, Kingsley (2010) reunites East and West at their shamanic root.

To consider the places of similarities between the pre-Socratic eastern Mediterranean and Native America, we need to revisit the contentious shamanic discourse that was introduced in the literature review as we continue to cover this sensitive ground. The controversy centers on several key issues. *Shaman* is the Evenki word for *spiritual leader* and is culturally specific to certain Mongolian and Siberian Altaic traditions. Academics and society at large have ascribed meaning through a western interpretation and applied it broadly to spiritual traditions of Indigenous peoples the world over. There has been a backlash and assertion particularly from Native America that “a ‘shaman’ is not an Indian medicine man and ‘shamanism’ is not American Indian spirituality” (Starrhawke, 2000, para. 2). An obvious issue of contention is that these terms are not indigenous to American Indian languages, even if they are being used to describe similar, animistic-oriented spiritual traditions.

Within Euro-American frameworks, there have been varying trends in approaching this phenomenon. One has been to identify shamans as practitioners of ecstasy using trance states to travel and commune with the spirit world for the healing and benefit of individuals and communities (Eliade, 1964; Harner, 1990). It involves a specific method of ecstatic trance journeying that some contest is not evident within American Indigenous cultures (Forbes, n.d.; Schmidt, 2000; Starrhawke, 2000; Tuppan, 2001). Further, this anthropologically derived term has also been subsumed by a lay version of neo-shamanism that encompasses an amalgamation of beliefs and practices unrelated to the Mongolian and Siberian spiritual tradition from which it spawned and that has been exploited for monetary gain. Equally injurious, many perceive the phenomena as “primitive” as interacting with the spirit world defies western logic and rationality.

While there is often avoidance of this controversial topic, there are reputable Native scholars including Cajete (2000), Kawagley, (2006), Deloria (2006), John (2010), and Drabek (2012a) who write about shamans and do not necessarily distinguish them between medicine men and healers. With the increased usage of the term within indigenous literature, we can now rely on these scholars and cultural representatives to learn from their interpretations as appropriate. In general, there is a hesitancy to provide details of Native spiritual traditions—the indigenous names and roles of practitioners, their

ceremonies, and techniques—given their sacred nature and the traumatic history and collision with Christianity and western cultures. Words contain power and memory, and there is need to safeguard and protect what others have sought to eradicate, misuse, and idealize. The delicacy of this topic cannot be overstated. Not only are there historical issues of misrepresentation, there is trauma from the systematic efforts to render invisible Native spirituality (Brave Heart, 2004a, 2004b; Duran, 2006; Gone, 2007; Napoleon, 1996) as well as a very real dark element it contains when practitioners manipulate these practices adversely.

According to Cajete (2000), there is no word for *education* in indigenous languages, and he contends that the phrase *coming to know* is the best translation. In English, education means *a tradition of imparting knowledge* rather than *coming to know of something*, which is learning. This later refers not only to a systematic process but a quest and journey for knowledge, a “visionary tradition that encompasses harmony, compassion, hunting, planting, technology, spirit, song, dance, color, number, cycle, balance, death, and renewal” (Cajete, 2000, p. 80). It is science, the science of right relationship with the natural world and a way of knowing the nature of human existence through primordial connections. Ceremonies, rituals, storytelling, keen observation, and participation with all levels of existence provide meaningful practices and environments that facilitate *knowing*.

Within all peoples, tribes, and societies, there is imbalance. From an indigenous perspective, imbalance is a disharmony with nature, which includes the many realms of existence both seen and unseen. Cajete (2000) writes, “The teachers or mediators for the transfer of this knowledge of balance were primarily the healers or medicine people” (p. 116). Some were herbalists, others musculoskeletal and bone specialists, and some individuals were empowered to treat certain illnesses through the ceremonial use of plants and animals (Cajete, 2000, p. 116).

Whether a singer in Navajo tradition, a tribal midwife, or a keeper of specific songs and dances among the Tlingit of the Northwest, the role of the shaman as First Doctor, First Visionary, First Dreamer, First Psychologist, First Teacher, and First Artist was focused on the spiritual ecology of the group in relationship to its environment. (p. 117)

The shamans had an affinity and heightened skill for sensing and communicating with the non-physical worlds. In Yup'ik epistemology, an understanding of and relationship with the different realms of existence through the shared senses of humans and nonhumans is a developmental and psychological process that makes one aware and conscious that “all beings have the capacity to interact, associate, and resolve conflicts” (John, 2009, p. 60). The implication is that the shaman through a highly developed ability points the way to what is inherent and latent within the individual. *Shaman*, a word derived from the Evenki language and used here to describe a fundamental primal relationship, embodies both the process and successful arrival of *knowing* one's nature in relation to the unfolding mysteries of existence.

The *Iatromantis* were no different. Through their mastery of incubation and the cultivation of *mêtis*—awareness through all the senses simultaneously—they too guided others in the discovery of the natural and divine nature of humanity. They were masters in a most humble sense, not seeking recognition but practicing quietly in small circles. They too held many different roles within the ancient Greek world, and we now identify them as mystics, shamans, healers, priests, magicians, and sorcerers in the quest to remember this spiritual tradition. For the *Iatromantis*, the ecstatic state characteristic of some shamanic traditions was a deeply still union with the Divine. It is from this place that healing, knowledge, and *coming to know* arises. Within the pre-Socratic mystical tradition, *to know* was to recognize that one had arrived, conscious not merely of one's individual divinity but of Awareness expressing as a *daimôn* moving with the endless cycles of the cosmos. Empedocles makes quite clear he is “someone who knows he is divine” (Kingsley, 2010, p. 358). Those who do not understand him may think he claimed title to what could only be achieved by an elite few, when in fact nothing could be further from his intention (Kingsley, 2010). He was reminding us that we are all divine, endowed with the ability *to know*.

It would be remiss not to mention that this phenomenon also contains a dark and dangerously real aspect within the human experience. The word *daimôn*, which suggests a divine principle of the spiritedness of all life, has disintegrated, as evidenced particularly within Christian belief, to mean simply the demonic, which is to be avoided at all costs. What was whole separated into good versus evil. There is fear and resistance for some to

even broach this topic whether due to traumatizing colonizing forces or to the misuse of power within local groups and communities. Drabek (2012a) addresses this issue in relation to the revival of traditional mythological stories and offers this interpretation of an Alutiiq Elder from Kodiak:

Her view is shared by some that to revive such stories will awaken “shamanic” traditions, which many fear and believe have been extinguished and should stay that way. However, this strong aversion to traditional stories raises questions about its influence. Perhaps in a wider investigation we can identify the colonizing factors that brought about this suppression within our community, and also identify more appropriate terms for describing traditional practices and beliefs that will not carry the same negative connotations they do in English today. (p. 21)

It seems, then, that a great responsibility and opportunity is to heal our relationship to this way of knowing rooted beyond time and space and found at the heart of ancient Greek mysticism and indigenous traditions, many of which are still in touch with this aspect of our unified stories.

To conclude this section, we turn again to Duran (2013). In *The Condor and the Eagle*, he writes, “Everything we see, which comes through our senses, depends entirely on the real world that we don’t see, but for me as an Indian this kind of faith defines reality. It is a faith that says I know when conventional thinking says I believe” (p. 67). If this knowing is reflective of indigenous perspectives in general, and the *epistēmē* of the pre-Socratics is commensurate with such sophistication, then, there is more beneath the surface that is common than the outward expression of our differences. In *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence*, Deloria (2012), who was well ahead of his time, outlines the work at hand; “our next task is the unification of human knowledge” (p. 282). Toward that proposition, the last place of intersection to consider is the shared knowing of an interrelated and unified cosmology.

## **A Unified Universe**

Modern science is just arriving at the same conclusions that Indigenous peoples and the pre-Socratics have long known. Quantum physicists are now discovering that the universe is undivided, interconnected, operates beyond the principles of time and space, and is alive, related to, and communicative with all aspects of itself. The western notions of aether and energy Duran (2013) says are equivalent to the indigenous use of spirit, as they indicate a living and aware universe. Although named differently in Native cultures across the Americas, Duran (2013) describes “the axiology of Native Americans as oneness with Great Spirit” (p. 170). Likewise, the pre-Socratics valued oneness with the Divine. Many native cultures especially before contact lived according to the authority of the natural laws of holism. They did not differentiate their world into compartments and proclivities. Within indigenous cosmologies, “the physical wholeness of the cosmos does not have a spiritual implication nor does it have a secular one” (Duran, 2013, p. 273). It is not based on science or religion as defined by western society because within such a worldview, this conflict never existed. Life in its completeness is characterized as a response to the world through the whole being including “experience, intuition, philosophy, active participation and interaction, and perception” (Duran, 2013, p. 201). This description is also characteristic of the qualities of *mêtis* that enabled the pre-Socratics to know what lies behind all physical appearances. Its symbol is the circle (Kingsley, 2003).

The circle is nature’s design and has long been associated with American Indigenous traditions. A famous quote that beautifully portrays the significance of the circle comes from Black Elk, the renowned Oglala Lakota holy man:

You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round.

Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle.

The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of



a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves. Our teepees were round like the nests of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the nation's hoop, a nest of many nests, where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children. (Neihardt, 1972, pp. 150-151)

The shared worldview of many Native peoples is the “circularity of existence” (Bruchac, 2003, loc. 67). While circles symbolize completeness, cycles are repetitive as are the seasons, phases of the moon, rising and setting of the sun, ebb and flow of the tides and of the cosmos.

For the pre-Socratics, the constant flux throughout the universe is held within a silent, still, and unified whole. Within the completeness there is no beginning or end, only an endless repetition that invites our awakening and conscious participation within the cycles. Empedocles links the story of the soul with that of cosmos as we move from life to death and over again (Kingsley, 2010). Here the convergence of pre-Socratic and indigenous ways of knowing culminates with the serious consideration that below the surface, out of reach of the rational mind, the Greek mystics' story of the immortality of the soul shares a timeless kinship with the cyclical nature of the spirited worlds of Native cosmologies.

### **From Similarity into a Great Divide**

An ancient Greek epistemology similar to indigenous ways of knowing based on oral transmission, deeply rooted in nature, navigated through a heightened awareness, and lived through a unified cosmology was long-abandoned by the European colonial settlers who arrived on these Native lands of the western hemisphere. The changing winds of 400 BCE turned the *love of wisdom* into a discursive art of arguing and debating philosophical and metaphysical perspectives and left its natural heritage behind. The new philosophy, which we now erroneously associate with the pre-Socratic mystics, continued to deteriorate further fracturing into two dichotomous branches of science and religion.

The development of philosophy, metaphysics, science, and religion at the exclusion of a timeless epistemology moved western civilization increasingly toward a worldview that no longer provided a complete picture or knowledge of the entirety of existence. The

West deviated from the natural order and discarded these original teachings (Duran, 2013, p. 270). A divide between the West and Indigenous peoples grew, and now as Deloria (2012) laments, “We are speaking two different languages” (p. 1). The next chapter follows the rise of the new and divergent western worldview.



## Chapter 6

### The Rise of the Western Worldview

#### **Unraveling Western Civilization**

Pythagoras, Parmenides, Empedocles, other pre-Socratics, and Socrates himself, lived during a unique historical time. Situated on the edge of the Asian continent, they were the contemporaries of Shakyamuni Buddha, Confucius, Laozi, and the Zoroastrian followers of Zarathustra. These philosophical and spiritual figures from the eastern Mediterranean were part of a larger region of cultures heavily influenced by traditions from Mesopotamia, the Levant, and the Nile Valley—together known as the Fertile Crescent. This area bridged West and East in a multicultural region of human potential that centered on agriculture, trade, urbanization, writing, science, and religion (Mark, 2009, para. 2). Mesopotamia, in particular, is called the cradle of civilization because it housed Eridu and Uruk of Sumer and later Babylon, some of the earliest cities dating back to the Bronze Age (Mark, 2009, 2011a). The region also gave access to the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe.

The image of the West is shrouded in perplexing and disturbing contradiction. The West's search for identity through philosophy, art, literature, Christian values, and science is tainted with violence and destruction, marking its rise to world power and domination. The outcome is far different than the ancient Greeks' philosophy of nature that taught the universe was a harmonious and ordered whole, the human a divine participant in the cycles of the cosmos, and science the direct application of the revelation of oneness. Socrates' motto "know thyself" contrasted with the Sophists of the time who used rhetoric to convince listeners of Athenian political ideals (Steely, 2013). Socrates openly questioned the social and moral ethics of Athenian leadership and advocated for a just society based on the mysteries that lie behind everyday experiences led to his trial and execution by the Athenian state. The world of antiquity gradually changed as western civilization became associated with a philosophical worldview thought to have originated with Plato and Aristotle and a model of Athenian democracy the West still credits exclusively to Greece (Kingsley, 1995, 1999, 2003). Politics blurred with the changing scientific and religious views of the Greco-Roman era.

During the Hellenic period, Alexander the Great, a student of Aristotle's, amassed one of the largest empires in the ancient world establishing Greek colonies in Babylonia, Persia, India, and Egypt (Mark, 2013; Steely, 2013). As trade routes opened along the Silk Road of China and the sea routes to India and Southeast Asia were explored, the lure of silk, spices, and other goods brought Greco-Roman traders in search of items not available in the Mediterranean, and a global economy between the many traders of Afro-Eurasia was born (Hayward, 2011, p. 108). In the waning years of Alexander's conquest, the Roman Empire was becoming a formidable military power expanding citizenship to neighboring territories (Steely, 2013). At its height, the Roman Empire stretched from Scotland to the Persian Gulf, and by the fourth century CE, Roman civilization succeeded in uniting the Mediterranean world but was experiencing its decline. A critical reason for the Empire's struggle stemmed from its lack of a cohesive religious center (Steely, 2013). There was disunity amongst the polytheistic Roman/Byzantine authorities as well as difficulty assimilating Jews and early monotheistic Christians into the Empire.

Christianity arose in response to the political and social crises of these times. The Roman Emperor Constantine legalized Christian worship and declared Constantinople—previous Byzantium and now Istanbul—the New Rome, shifting the imperial seat of power from west to east (Steely, 2013). The Catholic Church asserts that it originates with Christ, although Rome persecuted Christians and banned Christianity until its legalization with Constantine's signing of the Edict of Milan in 313 CE. "Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea, which agreed the first uniform Christian doctrine" (Hayward, 2011, p. 64). With the support of the new imperial center, Christianity became the state religion, and the institutionalization of the church's teachings spread throughout the region in hope of uniting the divided Empire. In the foreword to Newcomb's (2008) *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Christian Doctrine of Discovery*, Peter d'Errico defines Christendom as an alliance that developed between church authorities and secular princes culminating in the divine right of kings and popes operating in the name of Christ (loc. 13–20).

Although Constantine is recorded to be the first Roman Emperor who converted to Christianity, there remain questions about the nature and allegiance of his faith (Steely, 2013, p. 25). Constantine's partiality to the sun god Sol suggests the deity's instrumental

role in the rise of Christendom and uniting the fractured Roman Empire. Henotheists believe in the existence of many gods while focusing on the superiority of a chosen one. Popularizing the singular supreme Sun God by etching the figure into Roman coins and other references, Constantine was better able to move the Empire toward the acceptance of a *One God* theology and declare Christianity its religion (Clark, 2009). In homogenizing the differing religious factions, Christianity sprang not only from the intermixing of the Greco-Roman deities Apollo and Sol, there was also a connection with the “Afrikan-Kemetic-Egyptian Deity, Heru, who was re-named Apollo by the Euro-Greeks and Romans” (Nantumbu, 2005, para. 8). Polytheistic, henotheistic, and monotheistic beliefs blended to form a new religion named Christianity.

Whatever Constantine’s personal faith, it was clear his intent was to unify a disparate Empire using Christianity as the instrument in executing this ambitious goal. The Western Roman Empire gradually dissolved, and the Eastern half survived as the Byzantine Empire until the surrender of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks a thousand years after the fall of the Western Empire (Steely, 2013). Christianity is the legacy of this political and social history. It is important to distinguish between the rise of Christendom that used Christian doctrine to declare the divine right of kings and popes in the justification of attempting global, religious domination and Yesu’a (Jesus of Nazareth) whose teachings included the liberating message that “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21, King James Version).

To the Roman Emperors, the indigenous Germanic tribes of Europe—the Goths, Franks, Angles, and Saxons, to name a few—were the “barbarians” of the North and the Celts the “barbarians” of the West. Ironically, it was these tribes, particularly the Franks and Visigoths, who came to settle within Roman territory and forever disrupt its imperial power (Mark, 2011b). The Middle Ages spanned from 476 c.–1500 CE with the deposing of the last emperor of the Western Empire and its gradual end correlating with the fall of Constantinople in 1453 (Steely, 2013). The Middle Ages are typified as a period of relative intellectual and economic darkness for Western Europeans in contrast to the achievements and vibrant cultural life at the crossroads of the Mediterranean. Alongside Latin Christendom, it was a time that witnessed the rise of two influential western institutions:

the monastery (100–1100 CE) and the university (1100–1500 CE) (McNeely & Wolverson, 2008).

While the debate and discourse of later Greek philosophers replaced the *love of wisdom* practiced by pre-Socratic masters (Kingsley, 1995, 1999, 2003), there was a growing literary movement in the polis of Athens. The library at Alexandria sprang from classical Greek society and provided a new way of organizing knowledge (McNeely & Wolverson, 2008). The ownership and scholarship of knowledge became a weapon for wielding political power and building the expansive Greek empire. As Alexandria collapsed, its library suffered, and Christian monasteries assumed the preservation of knowledge in their seclusion away from urbanization (McNeely & Wolverson, 2008, pp. 40-41).

Christianity was the guiding ideology of these monastic institutions of learning. Soon medieval universities naturally formed around the gathering of students and teachers; originally *universitas* was not a physical place but was “a concept in ancient Roman law referring to a sworn society of individuals” (McNeely & Wolverson, 2008, pp. 79-80). As Europe rebounded from the devastation of Roman influence, monasteries still housed scholars while *universitas* offered more secular centers for the pursuit of knowledge.

The Middle Ages were also plagued with famine, warfare, religious persecution, rebellion, the Black Death, and economic poverty. The Renaissance arose out of the Late Middle Ages with a humanistic emphasis that helped galvanize the growing disquiet within the Church, and both the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation were reactions against the corruption within the Roman Catholic hierarchy (Steely, 2013). While the Roman Catholic Church authorized the Inquisition to silence heresy and to force conversions, the Protestant Church persecuted and executed “witches” across Europe and the Americas. Both viewed those who did not uphold the beliefs of their respective faiths as heathens and heretics, and a tyrannical Christian epoch that spanned Europe and into the indigenous “New World” declared the Church was the authoritative intermediary between man and God.

From the rise of early Greek city-states to the present-day, literary, political, religious, scientific, economic, and social forces (McNeely & Wolverson, 2008; Steely, 2013) have shaped the value system of the West. Ferguson (2011) identifies six concepts that set

the West apart from other societies and that emerged most noticeably in the beginning of the 15th century: competition, science, the rule of law, modern medicine, consumerism, and the work ethic. The principles of achievement, mercantilism, consumption, and materialism coalesced into an economic philosophy that became the basis of early modern European society (Steely, 2013). It was to become a worldview that would forever alter the course of humanity and the earth. These changing values, particularly of Western Europe, occurred in conjunction with an accelerating scientific paradigm that had subtly been shifting since 400 BCE. The view of the cosmos as an object and phenomenon to be understood rather than an interrelated whole to be experienced and revealed became the prevailing view of the West (Kingsley, 1995, 1999, 2003). Not only was an inner science of divine union replaced by an epistemology based on human reason and logic—the birth of modern science—it was further disparaged by quickening hegemonic forces of a Christian imperial state that required belief in an external, monotheistic, patriarchic, and judgmental God—the antithesis of natural philosophy.

The Roman Catholic Church's struggle with scientific thinking originates not with the pre-Socratics but with its controversial relationship with Aristotle, the iconic figure we associate with transforming rational philosophy into science. An Aristotelian—and later Ptolemaic—geocentric view that the earth was the center of the universe was the dominant paradigm until the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Steely, 2013, p. 96). Aristotle's theory supported Catholic ideology, but nevertheless his secular views were antagonistic to the Church. An essay by Brother Azarias in 1888 proposes a true account of the relationship between the two, and he describes Aristotle in these words:

A great philosopher comes among men. He reduces thought and the expression of thought to a science. He teaches the secret of method; he shows how to define and to divide; he initiates into the mode of observing and classifying the facts of nature, and of constructing the natural sciences. The wonderful grasp of his genius takes hold of the human intellect in the East and in the West, and marks out for it the grooves in which it shall think and the very terms and forms of expression it shall use for all time. Other geniuses may charm the human intellect, and be suggestive of thought and systems of thought, but it is only Aristotle who has been able to impose



upon humanity his very forms of thought and expression to that extent that they are today as much part of our thinking as the idioms of our speech. And there is no department of human science to which his dominion does not extend. (Brother Azarias, 1888, XIII, para.1)

The Church could not condone the secularization of science that ignored the existence of God, but Brother Azaria (1888) notes the “pagan philosopher” kept his mind on the Divine in all of his studies (XIII, para. 3). Although Aristotle may have been a man of faith, from Kingsley’s (1995, 1999, 2003) account, an Aristotelian way of intellectualizing was worlds apart from the pre-Socratic knowing of the Divine.

The invention of the telescope and microscope opened new fields of study making visible to the physical eye what refuted accepted Christian belief (Wettermark, 1974). Even so, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was condemned by the Inquisition for his controversial espousal of a heliocentric theory and support of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) that proposed that the sun, not the earth, is the center of the solar system (Steely, 2013, p. 96). Although this is not entirely correct, as the sun is not fixed either, the implications of Galileo’s theory sealed not only his own fate but also that of a more divisive disagreement between Aristotelian and Copernican scientific theory. In 1992, the Roman Catholic Church ended the long-standing dispute and publically acknowledged that Galileo’s premise was right (Cowell, 1992). Nevertheless, the fissure between science and religion has remained, both enthroned by their respective advocates.

Despite outward appearances, the Catholic Church was corrupt and out of touch with the lives of ordinary Catholics (Steely, 2013, p. 69). In response, the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation moved through Europe producing cultural and intellectual changes coupled with an accelerating scientific revolution. René Descartes (1596-1650), a French mathematician and philosopher, lived on the cusp of these changing times. He explained the material world in terms of mathematical laws while his philosophical work contributed toward the development of the natural sciences (Steely, 2013, p. 97). His famous statement “Cogito ergo sum”—I think therefore I am—suggests that the questioning of one’s existence proves it by the mere act of doing so. This declaration has become a fundamental axiom of western philosophy. Descartes’ distinction

between the mind and body—spirit and matter—emboldened dichotomous thought and helped shape a dualistic paradigm, a defining characteristic of the modern western worldview.

Descartes, however, was known to be deeply contemplative, and there is evidence within his writings of an alternative meaning of his esoteric philosophy. Descartes' epitaph read, "During winter leisure time he compared the mysteries of nature with the laws of mathematics and ventured to hope that the same key would be able to open both" (as cited in Wettermark, 1974, para. 10). Through personal experience and inner revelation, he believed that "poets with their 'enthusiasm' are nearer wisdom than philosophers with their 'reason'" (Wettermark, 1974, para. 15). His writings indicated a belief that "knowledge is spiritual, because the force through which we properly know things is purely of the spirit" (Wettermark, 1974, para. 14). Descartes questioned authority and facts gleaned from books and wanted to "liberate himself from all the opinions that had been implanted in his mind and to adjust them by the "natural light of 'reason'" (Wettermark, 1974, para. 3). His use of "reason," however, was not the deductive reasoning that many since have thought he meant but referred to a divine, intuitive perception of the "secret continuity between the universe and the human mind" (Wettermark, 1974, para. 13).

At this time in history, one of the many events that contributed toward the degeneration of esoteric writings, says Wettermark (1974), was the use of the printing press because it allowed for the widespread dissemination of spiritual texts that were generally misunderstood by the general populace. Descartes' esoteric views are obviously paradoxical juxtaposed with his theories that rationalization is the measure of all material things and that matter is cut off from spirit. It is necessary to question his actual meaning and intent. Was he retreating from esoteric philosophy in favor of physical and mechanistic explanations, or were his theories referring to the principles that govern human logic, which limit our ability to know what reason alone never can? If the latter is true, Descartes' teachings were akin to the poetic pre-Socratic mystics and are yet another example within western history where human reason has been blind to the mysteries of timeless wisdom. As with Socrates and the pre-Socratics, the rationalists who came after Descartes were

inclined to use those parts of his writings most suited to exclusionary perspectives to suit their own ideological perspectives and worldviews.

In addition to the intellectual, social, economic, scientific, political, and religious phenomena that were sweeping across Europe, there was another critical movement that irrevocably affected the course of human history and that is embedded within the fabric of western society today—exploration, imperialism, and colonization. In the High and Late Middle Ages, religious wars took Christian Europeans to the Holy Land and other regions of the Near East in a campaign against Muslim occupation (Steely, 20013, p. 45). In their crusades, they were introduced to other cultures and exotic goods often unknown to them that others had been trading in for centuries. This whetted their appetites for the riches of the world beyond Europe. Their desire to explore other regions and to find new sea routes to East Asia brought Portuguese explorers along the coast of Africa and Spanish expansion across the Atlantic. “Their motivations for the conquests were three-fold, but simple: Spread Christianity; seek personal glory; and, seek gold” (Steely, 2013, p. 61). Before Europeans knew of the lands, nations, and civilizations of Native America, they thought they lived at the westernmost edge of the world. How these small European countries came to dominate the world is a question that naturally follows.

### **“Coming of Age” through a Fragmented View**

Conveniently for the West, both the scientific community and the doctrine of the Church encouraged and contributed to the establishment of Europe’s overseas empires. With their conquests, the focus of the West shifted to the western coast of the European continent. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) played a key role in the West’s rise to world domination. “England’s Sir Francis Bacon stressed scientific experiments be carefully recorded to be reliable and observable and helped develop the modern scientific method” (Steely, 2013, p. 97). Science and technology justified the right to control and subdue nature in the pursuit of acquiring and accumulating knowledge. The ancient use of *common sense* was long buried and in its place was a rapidly accelerating orientation toward knowing and observing the world only through the physical senses. Science espoused empirical methods be used to analyze and quantify everything measureable, leaving behind

the symbolisms and meanings of old traditions. By dismissing the intuitive and an innate interconnectivity with the natural world, the western world came to believe, whether due to maligned altruism, selfish and materialistic gain, or some combination of both, that it could master the world, its inhabitants, and all of nature. Christianity reflected this worldview giving the patriarchal male superiority over everything. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28, King James Version). The Church, although embroiled in its conflict with science, justified the exploitation of peoples, nature, and resources through its theology and sanctioned the belief that it was its duty and obligation to bring others to their God at whatever the cost. A revived crusade then moved to what they called the "New World."

To protect itself from outside threats and ensure its survival, the Roman Catholic papacy became a "claimant of universal authority" (Steely, 2013, p. 48). The justification of imperialism, the global slave trade, colonization, and the Doctrine of Discovery rests with several specific papal bulls that declared war on all Africans—Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, and all other non-Christian Indigenous peoples: *Dum Diversas* of June 18, 1452, *Romanus Pontifex* of January 8, 1455, and *Inter caetera* of May 4, 1493. The language of savagery dating back to the ancient Greeks was by now etched into the western psyche and further reinforced and echoed in these papal bulls that would forever alter the course of the indigenous world (Williams, Jr., 2012). Prior to Cristóbal Colón's arrival on Guanahani Island, what he mistook for Hindustan, the kingdoms of Portugal and Spain were vying for possession of colonial territories along the African coast (d'Errico & Gaitenby, 1998b, para.1). At the time, the Pope was the arbitrator of disputes, and both kingdoms sought papal bulls to support their cause and the spread of Christianity (d'Errico & Gaitenby, 1998b, para. 1).

*Dum Diversas* authorized the King of Portugal to "capture, vanquish, and subdue the Saracens [Muslims], pagans, and other enemies of Christ," to "put them into perpetual slavery," and "to take all their possessions and property" (as cited in Newcomb, 1992, para. 3). Pope Nicholas V reinforced the Church's position with *Romanus Pontifex* authorizing the Portuguese "to subject to servitude all infidel peoples" (Nantumbu, 2008, para. 10). It gave

Portugal dominion over non-Christian lands, which became the basis for Portugal's later claims to indigenous lands of the Americas (d'Errico & Gaitenby, 1998b, para. 2).

When Columbus sailed for Portugal's colonial rival, they appealed to the new Pope Alexander VI to issue another papal bull in their favor. *Inter caetera* assigned to Spain—what was then a union of Castile and Aragon—"the exclusive right to acquire territory, to trade in, or even to approach the lands lying west of the meridian situated one hundred leagues west of the Azores and Cape Verde Islands" except for any lands already acquired by another Christian prince (d'Errico & Gaitenby, 1998a, para. 3). To avert an impending war between Spain and Portugal, the Pope ratified the Treaty of Tordesillas "whereby he decreed that all lands discovered West of the imaginary demarcation line he drew across the earth went to Spain and lands discovered to the East were given to Portugal" (Nambutu, 2005a, para. 17).

The earlier papal dicta *Dum Diversas* and *Romanus Pontifex* legalized the enslavement of African and other Indigenous peoples while the *Inter caetera* sanctioned the practice of colonization. Columbus's reports back to Spain describing the Native inhabitants across the Atlantic Ocean were conflictual, some stereotyped as the most peaceful of peoples and others as vicious and cannibalistic (Williams, Jr., 2012). Regardless, the prevailing belief throughout Europe was that through conquest and colonization, the conversion to Christianity was in the savages' best interest and that through these papal bulls, God had ordained the furtherance of the Christian world.

In 1513, King Ferdinand II of Aragon and his daughter, Queen of Castile and León, issued the *Requerimiento*. It claimed that the Roman Catholic Church under the papacy, said to have originated with the apostle St. Peter, had political and divine authority over the entire human race including Moors (Muslims), Jews, Gentiles, and all other sects (National Humanities Center, n.d.). Spanish invaders read the document aloud, without interpreters, when the invaders made contact with the inhabitants of the western hemisphere, and it was at times delivered without audience as the invaders came ashore (National Humanities Center, n.d.). The *Requerimiento* declared that all conquered peoples were obliged to submit to Spanish rule and Christian teachings, that if they submitted, they would enjoy many privileges and benefits, and if they refused, they would be subjected to enslavement,

forced conversions, war, and the worst of consequences (Cookson, 2003; National Humanities Center, n.d.). The following is an excerpt from the *Requerimiento*:

Herefore, as best we can, we ask and require you...acknowledge the Church as the Ruler and Superior of the whole world, and the high priest called Pope, and in his name the King and Queen Doña Juana our lords, in his place, as superiors and lords and kings of these islands and this Tierra-firme by virtue of the said donation, and that you consent and give place that these religious fathers should declare and preach to you the aforesaid.

If you do so, you will do well, and that which you are obliged to do to their Highnesses, and we in their name shall receive you in all love and charity, and shall leave you, your wives, and your children, and your lands, free without servitude, that you may do with them and with yourselves freely that which you like and think best, and they shall not compel you to turn Christians, unless you yourselves, when informed of the truth, should wish to be converted to our Holy Catholic Faith, as almost all the inhabitants of the rest of the islands have done. And, besides this, their Highnesses award you many privileges and exemptions and will grant you many benefits.

But, if you do not do this, and maliciously make delay in it, I certify to you that, with the help of God, we shall powerfully enter into your country, and shall make war against you in all ways and manners that we can, and shall subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and of their Highnesses; we shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them as their Highnesses may command; and we shall take away your goods, and shall do you all the mischief and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey, and refuse to receive their lord, and resist and contradict him; and we protest that the deaths and losses which shall accrue from this are your fault, and not that of their Highnesses, or ours, nor of these cavaliers who come with us.  
(National Humanities Center, n.d., para. 5–7)

With these instructions, Christian newcomers found their way to what they thought was the “New World.” The gold and silver of Mexico and Central/South America exploited by

Christian explorers dependent on African and Indian slave labor filled the churches, palaces, and pockets of the upper European class with unimaginable wealth and became the standard for a world monetary economy (Weatherford, 2010).

While Catholic Spain crusaded through the central and southern regions of the western hemisphere, Protestant England Anglicized the idea of the savage in their colonization of the lands in the north (Williams, Jr., 2012). For both Catholics and Protestants, the Church, through the mandate of the Pope and the English crown, authorized the conquest and conversion of all heathen savages, as they rivaled for their respective “brand of Christianity” (Williams, Jr., 2012, p. 188). The papal bulls and *Requerimiento* giving Christian Europeans global jurisdiction over non-Christian peoples were powerful instruments in the raping and pillaging of Indigenous peoples, lands, and resources throughout the Americas. As detailed in *Pagans in the Promised Land*, Church doctrine helped to establish and reinforce a cognitive framework that justified Christian domination while claiming that Indigenous peoples and lands had been virtuously conquered, a religious conceptual model which later became the basis of the Doctrine of Discovery and the cornerstone of federal Indian law and policy in the United States (Newcomb, 2008, loc. 1576).

The *Requerimiento* was in place until 1556 and was abolished as its justification came under question (Hiscock, 2007). The papal bulls, however, have never been rescinded. Deloria (2003) wrote of these papal dicta in his seminal book *God is Red* first published in 1972. Since then, various groups including the Indigenous Law Institute and the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers have called upon the Vatican, to no avail, for their rescindment (Chittister, 2009; Newcomb, 2008).

To continue here with the arrival of Europeans to the western hemisphere, there is another piece of the story that is not commonly told in history books that may have influenced an accelerated and barbaric epoch of imperialism and settler-colonialism in the Americas. Menzies (2002) provides compelling evidence that China traded and established colonies in the Americas sixty years prior to Columbus. Through an investigative journey into medieval history, charts, and cartography, Menzies (2002) found maps of “Patagonia, the Andes, Antarctica, the east coast of Africa, Australia, the Caribbean, Greenland, the

Arctic and Pacific and Atlantic coasts of both North and South American long before Europeans arrived” (p. 32). This revisionary text shows it was Chinese explorers and cartographers who sailed using celestial navigation and who drew maps of the entire world with such accuracy and precision. Under the influence of the Portuguese Prince Henry the Navigator, European explorers were actually following in the wake of their Chinese predecessors (Menzies, 2002).

While it is important to know this history that has been thoroughly confused and expunged from memory, we also cannot lose ourselves debating the details at the expense of distancing ourselves from its human story. The telling of the history of western civilization most often conveys a tone of passivity, acceptance, and ambivalence, and it is incumbent upon us to find more inclusive and expansive perspectives of our histories that touch into our shared humanity. For the global society, a vital and missing piece of the story that this research addresses is the emergence of a western worldview far different from the ancient Greeks’ epistemology of the cosmos that provided a map for the soul’s mergence with the divine. Rational philosophers and scientific and religious “thinkers” slowly erased the past, leaving but a faint trace of this ancestral line of the West. The new learning supplanted the old ways of knowing, and the West “came of age” through a fragmented worldview.

### **The Paradox of Enlightenment**

The Enlightenment was not a unitary event but was “transnational” and “offered new vision of society and government” and “challenged existing institutions and ideas” (Steely, 2013, p. 115). There is no consensus of the meaning of the word itself, but Enlightenment generally refers to the search for “truth” through reason (Outram, 2013). “Enlightenment was a desire for human affairs to be guided by rationality rather than by faith, superstition, or revelation, a world view increasingly validated by science rather than by religion or tradition” (Outram, 2013, p. 3).

The paradoxical nature of the American Enlightenment is evident within Jeffersonian ideals of *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness* that guided a young nation while undermining the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous peoples and



nations. Newcomb (2008) affirms that these values are difficult to understand from an indigenous perspective because of the Christian imperialistic context in which they originate (loc. 1085).

Man gained control over nature, and then over other human beings, by controlling them “rationally” through the use of technology. This means that nature is no longer seen as the location of mysterious powers and forces. Enlightenment in this view is ultimately totalitarian in the sense that it abandons the quest for meaning and simply attempts to exert power over nature and the world. (Outram, 2013, p. 5)

The Enlightenment brought together many elements into a globalized economic system that has come to occupy the world at the expense of Indigenous peoples.

The scientific Enlightenment was marked by physicist Isaac Newton’s (1642-1727) mathematical laws of the cosmos and of the heavens that describe the world as a predictable working machine. Some also suggest that Newton was devout in his search for God, using mathematical models to decipher hidden and esoteric meaning thought to be encoded within the Bible and that he died while still pursuing this passion (Drosnin, 1998). Such pursuits belie his deep need for this non-material aspect of existence. As the age of the Enlightenment was fading, the last eminent scientific mind to mention in the unraveling of the rise of the western worldview is Darwin (1809-1882). In honor of his 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, *Scientific American* wrote this about the controversial figure:

That, according to his convictions, all living things descended from a common ancestor. And that species were not to be attributed to God's endless creativity, but were the product of a blind, mechanical process that altered them over the course of millions of years. This alone was pure heresy. Darwin even nursed doubts about the very survival of human beings. (Marty, 2009, para. 1)

His treatise on evolution through natural selection riled creationists, and the continued clash between Darwinian theory and Creationism only compounds the fragmentation and divisiveness of an illusionary reality of dichotomous thought. It is a way of thinking based upon a falsely perceived fundamental condition of mutual exclusion.

This chapter has highlighted and synthesized significant aspects of various ages, epochs, and trends of western civilization, and it is within this shifting complexity that

settler-colonialism expanded and took hold in the Americas. This review accounts for many of the reasons for the colonizers' departure from their ancestral lands. They left to gain religious and political freedom, escape poverty and famine, acquire land, forge a better life, prosper and find wealth, experience adventure, establish a new Christian society, spread ethnocentric and altruistic values, etc. The irony is the colonial settlers rose up against their imperial motherland only to assume the same tyrannical role with the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas. Through the guise of liberation and freedom, western society rendered Native America invisible through its assumed superiority and ownership of knowledge, land, God, and nature.

### **An Invented Worldview**

Unlike indigenous worldviews and that of the pre-Socratics, an epistemology, ontology, and axiology of western civilization that was invented and shaped through political, social, religious, scientific, and economic forces gave rise to the current dominant paradigm. As Duran reminds (2013), "The ancients do not seem to have followed this pattern of accumulating knowledge" (p. 84). It is a fragmented and incomplete view because it abandons the path of nature, its spirit, and consciousness. It requires a "member-to-object relationship" (Duran, 2013, p. 169) with the world instead of spirit-to-spirit. This is not to suggest we entirely dismiss the western paradigm, but we need recognize that the denial of spirit and its separation from matter leads to a dysfunctional, dualistic worldview and malfeasance of the West (Deloria; 2012; Duran, 2013).

A natural tradition of the post-Socratic era eroded with the rise of the western mind stripped of the mysteries. It propelled western society into a spiritual crisis that it now barely recognizes. The next chapter addresses this pressing issue of our time as it unfolds with Indigenous peoples in "America's" dark night of the soul.



## Chapter 7

### “America’s” Dark Night of the Soul

#### **Introduction**

*Dark Night of the Soul* is a poem written by Saint John of the Cross (San Juan de la Cruz), a 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish poet and Roman Catholic mystic dedicated not only to reforming the Carmelite Order during the Counter-Reformation but to his unyielding longing for God. Starr (2002, 2004) is author of recent translations of Saint John of the Cross—as well as his contemporary, mystic and reformer, Saint Teresa of Ávila. *In Dark Night of the Soul*, Saint John laments the intense pain and hardship of the soul’s detachment and the extraordinary relief from such struggle experienced through divine union. This chapter uses this mystical metaphor of *dark night of the soul* to follow the West’s path, as it travels into the Americas and specifically what is now the present-day United States of America, into a disturbing angst that collides with Indigenous peoples. This chapter asserts that this collision stems largely from the lack of knowing and forgetfulness of such possible union as expressed by these western mystics and by certain ancient Greek philosophers including Parmenides, Empedocles, Heraclitus, etc.

#### **Suppressed Thanksgiving Speech**

For many American Indigenous peoples, the Thanksgiving holiday holds conflictual meaning and continues to be skewed through a western interpretation of events that has forever altered the relations between the original inhabitants of the current-day United States of America and the European colonial settlers. In 1970 in commemoration of the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pilgrims’ arrival at Plymouth Rock, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts invited Wampanoag Wamsutta (Frank) James to speak at their celebration (Tirado, 2011; Wamsutta, 1970). When the Commonwealth learned of his intention to address the atrocities and broken promises suffered by the Wampanoag, they revoked the invitation. Below is an excerpt from that suppressed speech, which is provided in its entirety in Appendix E.

It is with mixed emotion that I stand here to share my thoughts. This is a time of celebration for you—celebrating an anniversary of a beginning for the white man in America. A time of looking back, of reflection. It is with a heavy heart that I look back upon what happened to my People. (Wamsutta, 1970, para. 5)

Since 1970 on Thanksgiving Day, Native peoples from across the country have gathered annually at Cole's Hill overlooking Plymouth Rock to commemorate what has become known as a National Day of Mourning (Tirado, 2011).

In general, western society is oblivious to the widespread grievances of American Indigenous peoples. This dissertation suggests that there is pervasive despair, anxiety, and anger within the culture of today that at its root is related to the failed reconciliation of our histories and the disconnection with the spirit of this land, its First Peoples, and ourselves. As with the pre-Socratic tradition, many are unaware of what has been lost but have a deep and inexplicable feeling of discontent. It is the wounding of the western heart and mind that this research suggests needs to be healed.

### **An Unspoken Holocaust**

In American classrooms across the country, genocide is most often associated with the widely studied Jewish Holocaust and other world atrocities such as in Rwanda, Sudan, Cambodia, East Timor, etc. There is little mention made in the literature of the American Indigenous holocaust and the subsequent effects of these events that are embedded within the fabric of modern-day western society. In region upon region across the Americas, the post-Columbian Native population was decimated by an average of 95 percent, ranging between 90–98 percent annihilation (Stannard, 1993, loc. 61). In Hispaniola, 21 years after Columbus' misguided arrival, 8 million people had died from violence, disease, and despair (Stannard, 1993, loc 46). Estimates vary, but according to Lyons, Mohawk, Deloria, Jr. et al. (1992), there were 10–50 million Indigenous peoples in the United States prior to Columbus and 250,000 at the end of the Indian war era marked by the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890 (p. ix). The genocide of Indigenous peoples of the Americas is one of the greatest in magnitude in world history (Stannard, 1993). It, however, remains generally

unrecognized by the United States federal government, which concedes virtually no accountability and is unknown by the general populace.

In 2011, the White Bison Wellbriety Movement produced the documentary called *Journey of Forgiveness*. Traveling across the country, Native peoples came forward to discuss the traumatic and personal impacts of the boarding school era. The film begins with the legal definition of the crime of genocide as provided by the United Nations within international law.

Genocide is defined in Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) as “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.” (United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, n.d., para. 1)

The massacres of Sand Creek and Wounded Knee, the 1862 Dakota mass hanging, forced relocations including the Long Walk of the Navajos and the Cherokee Trail of Tears, the 500 boarding schools of which Carlisle in central Pennsylvania was the first, and the sterilization of women are just some of the many examples of the genocidal tactics of the United States federal government authorized by successive presidents (White Bison, 2011). The exposure to deadly diseases for which Native peoples had no immunity accounted for much of the devastation. For the European invaders, the spread of smallpox, measles, bubonic plague, diphtheria, influenza, malaria, yellow fever, typhoid, etc. was a successful form of biological warfare (Stannard, 1993, p. 53). Warfare, disease, and alcohol were a lethal trinity.

The early European colonialists tactfully won favor of many Indian peoples to help secure the outcome of the American Revolution. With their success, friendly alliances gave way to an underlying and violent national agenda of development. Over 800 treaties were entered into with the United States, “which promised the Indians that ‘as long as the rivers

flow, and the sun rises in the east,' the lands and resources that had been secured to them would be protected in perpetuity" (Lyons et al., 1992, p. ix). These broken agreements were coupled with a systematic barrage of educational and political policies that when combined annihilated Native peoples, dispossessed them of their ancestral homelands, and attempted to assimilate them into the religious, cultural, social, and economic milieu of western society through unimaginable acts of fear, coercion, and abuse.

The Indian Civilization Act of 1819 under James Monroe provided an education fund to accelerate the assimilation process and began the mission school era. This led to the system of day and boarding schools run by the Bureau of Indian Education and governed by Carlisle's founder, Captain Richard Pratt's, genocidal motto, "Kill the Indian, save the man" (Churchill, 2004).

During this time, in 1823, the United States Supreme Court adopted the Christian Doctrine of Discovery into law. *Johnson & Graham's Lessee v. Mc'Intosh* was a landmark case that set the precedent for the adoption of federal Indian policies based on the assumed legal right of the United States government to have dominion over Indigenous peoples and over, what Euro-Americans declared, were "unoccupied" lands (Newcomb, 1992, 2008). The case was a legal battle between non-Natives over the title to a parcel of land in the state of Illinois. Newcomb (2008) presents an in-depth analysis of how the Christian Doctrine of Discovery, through this case that is almost two hundred years old, is wedded with the U.S. legal system and federal Indian law. The following synopsis of the case comes from Newcomb's (2008) *Pagans in the Promised Land*.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, two land companies—the Illinois Land Company and the Wabash Land Company—acquired large tracts of land, first in 1773 from the Illinois Indians, known as the Wabash and then in 1775 from the Piankeshaw. Later in 1818, the U.S. Government sold 11,560 acres to William Mc'Intosh in the boundary of what had become the state of Illinois and said to be within the lines of the land companies' purchase from the Piankeshaws. The U.S. Supreme Court had to decide who had superior title. Was it the descendants of the land companies, Johnson and Graham, or Mc'Intosh? If the court decided in favor of the plaintiffs, it would concede that the U.S. Government did not have original title and that land could be purchased from American Indians.

The decision was unanimous and established that “Indians” could not sell land to private individuals. Chief Justice Marshall wrote the decision for the court, which assumed that the “United States as a society has an unquestionable right to lay down rules of its own making regarding the purchasing and holding of property” (Newcomb, 2008, loc. 1221). Further, Newcomb (2008) reveals how the rationale for this pivotal decision lies with the doctrine of Christendom carried forward by European invaders who thought themselves the chosen people in a new promised land of heathens. The imperialistic Christian “discovery” of the Americas gave permission for the subjugation of the original occupants. It gave the United States government the right to have dominion over the peoples, land, and resources as property while celebrating in the pretense that the infidels had been subdued and conquered in the name of God. Newcomb (2008) says this is simply delusional, and yet it is the mentality upon which a nation that proclaims separation of church and state rose to power and remains entrenched. Additionally, it has even further reaching implications as Williams, Jr. (2012) explains that this court decision is the precedent that Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have followed “for their domestic law on indigenous tribal peoples’ inferior rights to property and control over their ancestral lands” (p. 223).

Soon after the passage of the Doctrine of Discovery, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 under President Andrew Jackson “favored removing the Indians west of the Mississippi and clearing the area east of that river of all Indian title” (Lyons et al., 1992, p. 285). Later, the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934 (instituted in Alaska in 1936) sought to secure Indian rights on reservations and has been widely debated due to its underlying purpose to assimilate Native peoples through these provisions (Lyons et al., 1992). Assimilation marks the successful erosion of cultural identity, languages, governance, sovereignty, and spirituality into the mainstream dominant paradigm. By the early 1990s, “alcoholism, domestic violence, physical assault, murder, rape, theft, and widespread syphilis, were rampant in both worlds; Native peoples began committing the same insidious acts and lateral violence towards one another as did their colonizers (Whelshula, 1999, p. 72). In the eyes of the colonizer, the “problem” rests with Native peoples, and there never was a holocaust. The forgetting passes from one generation to another and further conditions our disassociated western society. We cannot comprehend



a time when we were not here rendering a realistic image of Native “America” generally invisible (Stannard, 1993). To manage the trauma of the West’s fragmentation into a dualistic worldview as documented in the previous chapters, we have both projected our savagery onto Native peoples and glorified them in search of our own lost indigenous identity.

### **The Myth of Discovery**

Christian-influenced policy authorized by the Papacy coupled with the quickening of scientific and technological innovation allowed the peoples of the West to believe themselves superior to others. An inflated worldview entitled Europeans to the “discovery” of the Americas in the name of civilization and progress and through self-proclaimed divine right. It was the West’s Manifest Destiny. To the “civilized” Europeans, the land was wild, a wilderness to be explored and harnessed and natural resources exploited for profit. In the foreword to *Exiled in the Land of the Free*, Peter Matthiessen calls this “a great myth that has been used to justify and sustain the seizure of North and South America from Native peoples” (Lyons et al., 1992, p. xi). In search of an inclusive understanding of these issues, relevant questions arise about the origination of Indigenous peoples of the Americas.

Throughout history, the West has thought, whether through scientific or Biblical perspectives, that American Indigenous peoples originated from the “Old World.” Among anthropologists and archeologists, there is much debate about the populating of the “New World.” While this discussion is beyond the scope of this research, it is important to briefly address this controversial subject. In the Americas, societies rose and fell with one civilization often built on top of the previous. Archeologists once thought the oldest known civilizations in the Americas were the Olmec, Zapotec, and Mayan cultures, but more recent discoveries show that a place called Huaricanga of the Norte Chico region in present-day Peru is older than those of Mesoamerica (Mann, 2006, pp. 193–196). The pyramid-like structures of Huaricanga existed before those of Egypt, and the cities of Norte Chico were being built in the same time as those of Sumer in the lower Tigris and Euphrates valleys ranking this region among other great birthplaces of civilization including the Indus Valley in Pakistan and the valley of Huang He, or Yellow River, of east central China (Mann, 2006,

pp. 193–196). As the oral histories of Native peoples tell, the indigenous cultures of the Americas were not so new.

Geneticists have been piecing together a scientific story of the peopling of the world through the DNA in our blood (Oppenheimer, 2004; Wells, 2004). These theories link people genetically around the world from Africa to Australia, India, China, Europe, the Middle East, the far north of Russia, and into the Americas. While geneticists reach the same conclusions that many Indigenous peoples have known through their cosmologies about the relatedness of all life, science is unable to find the definitive proof it seeks about how the world was populated so relatively swiftly. Scientists typically dismiss indigenous explanations of their emergence into this world as told in the creation narratives of the Maya of Central America, the Navajo of the Pueblo Southwest, the Yupi'k of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Deltas of Alaska, and hundreds more. The quick settling of the world by modern-day humans over about 80,000 years is not what is in question. How humanity did so, however, is not so clear.

Archeological evidence shows that Mesolithic people were living in caves like those at De Kelders in South Africa as long as 80,000 years ago. Wells (2004) attributes the cave dwellers' departure to a quantum leap in thinking that allowed for the survival of humanity through the last glacial period. The Chauvet Cave in southern France, dating back 30–32,000 years, was home to some of the earliest Europeans. The cave resembles a sanctuary covered in rock art that depicts an arduous journey through an ice age. Alongside artistic images of ibex, mammoth, bison, and wild horses are bear paw scratches etched into the walls indicating that the Cro-Magnon shared their habitat with these predatory animals (Wells, 2004).

Anthropological theory claims that the ancestors of Amerindians migrated in waves across the Bering Sea land bridge, Beringia, and along the coast from Siberia to Alaska and moved generally south and eastward populating the Americas during the end of the Wisconsin Glaciation of the latest glacial period that extended approximately 85,000 to 110,000 years ago (Mann, 2006). Estimates of arrival vary between 12,000 and 35,000 years ago with archeological sites in North America dating back to 19,000 years ago and in South America to 33,000 (Goucher & Walton, 2012). A new exhibit in Brazil includes

artifacts and cave paintings dating back 30,000 years—“throwing a wrench in the commonly held theory humans first crossed to the Americas from Asia a mere 12,000 years ago” (France-Presse, 2013, para. 2). It is important to note that these anthropological dates are highly controversial and an unreasonable amount of weight is often placed on these specifics. These dates simply indicate what was present at a particular time, not what was first, oldest, or most significant.

While there is cultural and genetic evidence that supports migratory theories of the populating of the world, it is critical to equally consider indigenous explanations—where “ancestors emerged into this world ages ago through sacred springs and underground caverns—pathways from previous worlds, previous existences” (Lyons et al., 1992, p. xi). The rock art found in ancient cave sites on three continents share shamanic motifs of the interrelationship and mergence between animals and humans. Despite the efforts of science to find conclusive explanations of the peopling of the world, humankind’s quick movement is shrouded in mystery.

Scientific theories seem to always fall short when they touch up against these mysteries of life. Myth, legend, and poetry of indigenous traditions give voice to what cannot be explained through science alone. When the two are considered equally—indigenous scientific theories—they bring broader understanding to our inquiries. When combined, they offer fuller meaning to the philosophies and sciences of life. When used complementarily, they may open us to different possibilities through their combined insights.

### **Native North America**

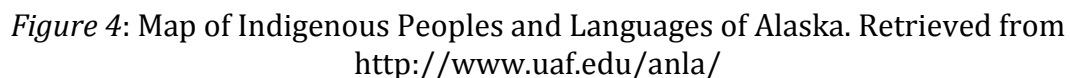
There were over 500 Indian nations in the Americas prior to 1492. Like all peoples, they had both positive and negative attributes, and as Weatherford (2010) cautions, “to confine them to one image, no matter whether done sympathetically or maliciously, subverts the truth and prevents a just understanding of their part” (loc. 41–55). With that said, there is little written about the contributions American Indigenous peoples have made to the world, particularly to the West at the expense of Indigenous peoples, nations, and their territories and lands. *Indian Givers* (2010) documents this ignored epic in history. The

book extensively details many significant events that forever changed the world, benefiting and strengthening the power structures of the West. These events include the rapacious exploitation of gold and silver that led to a new monetary system, the insidious practice of slavery and appropriation of indigenous raw materials to fuel the Industrial Revolution, the introduction to local crops that saved Europeans from starvation and farming techniques that allowed them to thrive, the benefits of many nutritious foods that found their way around the globe, the exposure to the ideals of freedom and liberty unlike anything known in Europe that helped form a young nation, an example of strength and resistance to cruel and oppressive systems, the exposure to local healing arts, medicinal plants, and the controlled use of many substances that later became part of an economically-driven drug market, the introduction to new building and architectural techniques that endured all kinds of weather, and the infrastructure of some of the best roads and trail systems including expert ways of navigation (Weatherford, 2010). This is only a part of the heritage of this land and its peoples. To not include these events is a gross oversight and reinforces skewed perceptions of history. The survival of Euro-Americans was clearly dependent on Native knowledge and resources. American Indigenous people were not intellectually inferior; they simply could not compete against the forces that sought their destruction—the strength of guns, diseases, and industrialization (Weatherford, 2010).

These First Nations and Peoples of the current-day United States of America made their homes on over 550 million acres; now they are left with approximately 50 million acres (Lyons et al., 1992, p. ix). Carapella (2012), of Cherokee and mixed heritage, spent 14 years, with the help of Elders and Indigenous peoples across North America, mapping Tribal Nations of the contiguous United States, Alaska, Canada, and Mexico. These maps show every documented tribe present before the arrival of Europeans in their original locations before invasion and displacement. They contain the names of the many tribes in their languages and the English name if the indigenous one has been lost. The maps are the most accurate and authentic vision of who was here before European invasion.

This is a tribute to all of those forgotten tribes whose names had been lost to the wind, but who live in the hearts and minds of modern-day Native Americans who managed to survive the largest full-scale holocaust in Man's history. We also honor

Figure 5, on page 147, shows an image of the *Tribal Nations Map* to date, and although not readable, it provides a sense of the many nations who first inhabited North America. Figure 4, directly below on this page, is a map of *Indigenous Peoples and Languages of Alaska* (Kraus, Holten, Kerr, & West, 2011) published by the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Together, these maps provide a visual glimpse of the indigenous nations and languages present prior to an unparalleled American holocaust.





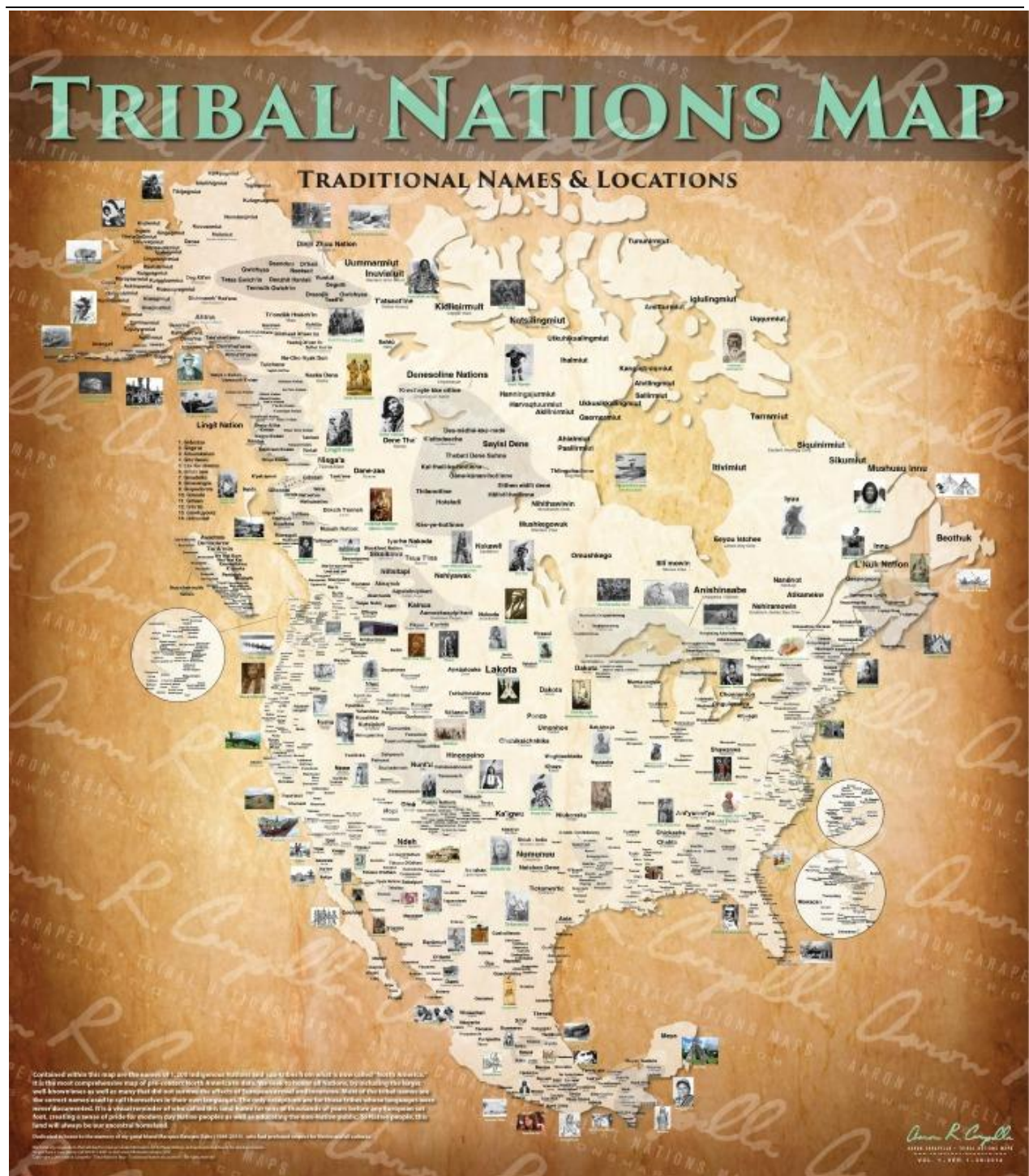


Figure 5: Tribal Nations Map. Retrieved from <http://aaron-carapella.squarespace.com/>

Throughout American history in the 48 contiguous states, Indian tribes were relocated to reservations and given land allotments. A federal statute enacted in 1948 based on several Supreme Court cases in the 1900s defines “Indian country” as below:

- a) All land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States Government, notwithstanding the issuance of any patent, and including rights-of-way running through the reservation,
- b) All dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States whether within the original or subsequently acquired territory thereof, and whether within or without the limits of a state, and
- c) All Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished, including rights-of-way running through the same. (United States Department of Justice, 2010, para. 1)

In 1998, this definition became the focal point of the Supreme Court’s landmark decision in *Alaska v. Venetie Tribal Government et al.* (Kendall-Miller, 1998; United States Department of Justice, 2010).

The reservation system was most disruptive to tribes in the contiguous states who were typically relocated to unfavorable tracts of lands far from their ancestral homes. The situation was quite different for Alaska Natives. In the far north of the country, where the government also established several different kinds of reservations, many communities were still living on their ancestral lands. In Indian country in Alaska, unlike the contiguous 48 states, many Native peoples were closely tied to their resource-rich homelands and technically entitled to certain sovereign rights including the power of taxation.

In 1971, the reservation system in Alaska was replaced with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). Signed into law by President Nixon, it was the largest land claim settlement act in the history of the United States (Kendall-Miller, 1998). By establishing Native corporations, the United States government settled and extinguished all aboriginal land claims in Alaska (Legal Information Institute, n.d.). This coincided with the authorization of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline in 1973. ANCSA provided the legal right-of-way for a corridor to transport crude oil 800 miles from Prudhoe Bay to the port of Valdez and promoted economic development in the state (Anders, 1986). It also led to the Alaska

National Interests Land Act (ANILCA) in 1980 and sweeping federal land management policies across the state.

There is much disagreement between and among Alaska Native groups regarding the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and its effects of the last 43 years. Despite differences of opinion, it is obvious that both the reservation and corporate systems primarily served the economic interests of the United States and were not intended to protect the rights of Native communities as self-determining, sovereign nations. The following example involving the Venetie Tribal Government in Alaska is but one example of the complexities of Native land issues and how the United States' judicial system has circumnavigated claims related to indigenous rights, self-determination, tribal governance, and sovereignty.

The Venetie Tribal Government was aware of these issues well before statehood and sought to protect their lands as best possible under the policies of the United States government (Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments, n.d.). Upon the tribe's request, the Secretary of the Interior in 1943 allotted approximately 1.9 million acres to the Neetsai' Gwich'in, an Athabascan group who inhabit a vast area north of the Arctic Circle, in the form of a reservation (Kendall-Miller, 1998). The passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) revoked the Venetie Reservation and all others in Alaska with the exception of one other reserve—Metlakatla (Legal Information Institute, n.d.). Instead, it created state-chartered private business corporations in fee simple title formed by Alaska Natives (Legal Information Institute, n.d.). The Venetie Tribal Government refused ANCSA's cash settlement and chose instead to keep its reservation status (Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments, n.d.; Gilbert, 2012). Still, ANCSA created two village corporations, one in Venetie and the other in Arctic Village (Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments, n.d.; Gilbert, 2012). The Neetsai' Gwich'in reconveyed the land back to the Tribe and dissolved the village corporations (Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments, n.d.; Gilbert, 2012).

When a construction company contracted with the State of Alaska to build a school in Venetie, the Tribe levied a \$161,000 tax for use of their land (Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments, n.d.; Gilbert, 2012). The state refused to pay and sued Venetie in Federal District Court. The case went to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and they ruled



in favor of Venetie. The state then appealed to the United States Supreme Court. The State of Alaska under Governor Tony Knowles expressed the following main concern, “Within Indian country, tribes have broad authority over matters of taxation and regulation, while states are precluded from exercising such fundamental sovereign powers” (Gilbert, 2012, para. 12). Many Native peoples took to the streets bringing attention to this unprecedented case, while public officials and the general populace feared it would create “chaos” not only in Alaska but also across the country (Gilbert, 2012; Kendall-Miller, 1998). In a final decision, the Supreme Court ruled against Venetie and in favor of the State of Alaska. It upheld that the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act did revoke the Venetie Reservation and the Tribe did not have the power of taxation because it no longer met the criteria of the Indian country statute (Legal Information Institute, n.d.).

This case exemplifies the deep and divisive issues regarding Indian land jurisdictions and tribal self-governance and sovereignty. The concept of land as property—of land ownership instead of relational stewardship—is a fundamental difference between two divergent worldviews. The systematic disconnection and dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their homelands is a defining characteristic of colonization (Waziyatawin, 2012, p. 72).

Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, and cosmological violence.

(Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 5)

With the “discovery” of the Americas, the acquisition of land was strong motivation for sanctioning genocidal tactics to secure a new country’s interests and power. It remains a fundamentally grievous and unresolved issue upon which the United States of America has been founded. The second part of this chapter, “America’s” Dark Night of the Soul, addresses how an imbalanced worldview that perceives peoples, lands, and resources as commodities to be subdued, exploited, and dominated—destroying and marginalizing indigenous cultures across the Americas through a systematic process of colonization—is a psycho-spiritual disease of the mind and psyche.

## **The Pathology of Colonization**

The West's movement away from its own indigenous-based knowledge, ways of knowing, and identity created an imbalance and a tear within the psyche pervasive within modern-day American society. The West's forgetting is akin to an infectious agent metastasizing through a colonized mind and deleterious worldview. Whelshula (1999) in her doctoral dissertation explores the manifestation of colonization among the Colville Tribes of Washington state and establishes the importance of healing from decolonization "through the process of recovering the Indigenous Mind" (p. 9). She deconstructs the western scientific paradigm and its epistemological assumptions from an indigenous and psychological perspective. This dissertation follows her suggestion and continues to inquire into these issues to help change the culture of today and facilitate transformative healing for *all people* (Whelshula, 1999, pp. 10–11). Toward that imperative, this research advocates for educating and creating awareness about of the pathology of colonization and for the healing of the western mind requisite for our collective wellbeing. The divisions etched within the psyche of the West need to be reconciled if there is to be any true partnership with Indigenous peoples.

Western society is generally blind to its own wounding and projects its pathology outwardly onto others, here the focus being American Indigenous peoples. "The questioning by professionals and lay people of Native peoples' inability to adjust implies they created their own circumstances and then were unable to solve their problems absolving Euro-Americans of any responsibility in the matter" (Whelshula, 1999, p. 6). Health and wellness are typically measured by western standards, and interventions, often ineffective at the least, derive from a worldview that created the conditions that now need remedy. There is general consensus across Indian country that mental health services do not work for Native peoples, and there is growing emphasis on approaches that come from the culture of the community rather than the clinic (Gone, 2007, 2010; Wexler, n.d.; White Bison, 2002).

Before colonization, Native communities did not show a propensity toward physical and mental weakness. Quite the opposite was true. Stannard (1993) writes, "The extraordinary health of Native peoples prior to Europeans was a key to their undoing.

Stannard (1993) is referring to the inability to ward off the many infectious diseases for which they had no antibodies, but his statement has further implications. Foreign germs were coupled with another kind of infection, the rapid and forced assimilation into another world incongruent with traditional philosophies and ways of being that once provided for healthy lifestyles. The addiction, abuse, violence, suicide, poverty, illness, etc., now prevalent within some Native communities is not an inherent weakness but has been a response to a diseased western psyche. American Indigenous peoples are holocaust survivors. As indicative of many trauma survivors, pathology results from what they have had to endure as well as strength and resiliency from their survivorship.

Tuck (2009) calls for a moratorium on “damage-centered” narratives that portray Native peoples and communities as broken and defeated. Such documentation may serve to hold oppressive systems accountable and leverage resources, but Tuck (2009) says it reinforces destructive self-images rather than playing to strengths. It is not to deny that issues exist within Native communities. More precisely, not addressing the historical context in which they arise perpetuates the cycle of oppression and violence by a society that renders the conditions of colonization and post-colonialism acceptable. In her article, Tuck (2009) quotes indigenous scholar Sandy Grande (2004).

The “Indian Problem” is not a problem of children and families but rather, first and foremost, a problem that has been consciously and historically produced by and through the systems of colonization: a multidimensional force underwritten by Western Christianity, defined by White supremacy, and fueled by global capitalism.  
(p. 19)

It is a difficult proposition that western society come to terms with Indigenous peoples’ histories with the United States into the current-day. It is one we as an American society have not been given opportunity to critically examine, reconcile, and heal. This research does not suggest religion, science, and capitalism—these forces that have shaped the western paradigm—are not of value. It does assert that the propagation of an imbalanced and dualistic worldview that justifies and makes these beliefs and values “right” and others “wrong” is central to the West’s dysfunction. Further, it brings attention and awareness to

another storyline, one behind the destructive and illusionary perception of duality and of a deep commonalty of our differences.

Tuck and Yang (2012) argue strongly that colonial guilt and responsibility can only be reconciled with the conceding of indigenous lands and imperial privilege. Further, anything less contributes toward our complicity, a false sense of innocence, ensuring western ownership and occupation of land already occupied (Tuck and Yang, 2012). Abenaki storyteller Bruchac (2003) offers another perspective of colonization. He says feeling guilty is counterproductive, and if we do, both of us, Indigenous and non-Native, have failed. This does not absolve us from responsibility. The onus rests heavily with the West, and we cannot continue to deny, justify, rationalize, remain complacent, and to silence our stories. Such “liberating discourse,” as Duran (2006) describes it, moves toward psychological and spiritual health through the healing of humanity’s deep soul wound, addressing the trauma inflicted upon Indigenous peoples as well as the cumulative effects of a “collective consumer colonization” on mainstream westerners (Duran, 2006, p. 14).

To better understand the pathology of the West, it is helpful to identify key terms that situate mental health issues of Native communities within the context of colonization and post-colonialism. Duran (1995, 2006), for example, correlates the critical issues affecting the wellbeing of Native peoples with intergenerational trauma and internalized oppression associated with the colonization process. In *Healing the Soul Wound*, Duran (2006) describes intergenerational trauma as an ancestral soul wounding passed down through the generations. Internalized oppression is when one identifies with the aggressor turning racist attitudes inward and mistreating self and others (Duran, 2006). These conditions arise within the social structure of a historically white colonial society intent on silencing indigenous identity. According to Wexler (2009a), in the circumpolar north, few researchers have made the connection between suicide rates of Iñupiaq youth and an ongoing colonial paradigm. In another article, Wexler (2009b) posits “if young people can make sense of their experiences by locating themselves and their situation within the historical understandings and community meanings, they are able to overcome hardship and sustain psychological health” (p. 271). Posttraumatic stress syndrome related to a colonial legacy and assimilation of western values in conflict with traditional worldviews

are major factors affecting the health of Indigenous peoples, communities, and youth. More specifically, Brave Heart names this syndrome postcolonial stress disorder caused by the historical trauma and unresolved grief of Euro-American colonization (Brave Heart, 2004a, 2004b).

Harold Napoleon's *Yuuyaraq: The Way of the Human Being* is a rare and seminal book used in academia that takes readers beyond analysis into an evocative, lived experience. From Hooper Bay, Alaska, Napoleon (1996) discusses the affects of the Great Death, the sweeping epidemics that afflicted Alaska Natives from the 1770s through the 1940s, in a forthright, personal narrative. The wide-scale death and loss of generational knowledge left not only psychological residue but also spiritual scars often too painful to be shared then exacerbated by their suppression (Napoleon, 1996). Although Napoleon's story is specific to Alaska Natives' spiritual health and identity, it has the potential to heal across relations. It is both our challenge and opportunity for the West to look inwardly at its loss of spirit played out through an ongoing colonial narrative where long ago we left behind an indigenous-based alliance now barely discernable. We no longer listen and respond from an ancient place of solidarity. Instead, we approach the "other" from our differences, a division between "them" and "us" that is at the core of our disease.

### **The Mental Health Status of the United States**

Today in the United States, millions of people suffer from some form of mental illness. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) cites a 12-month study of the prevalence, severity, and comorbidity of mental health disorders as diagnosed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DMS). The NIMH quotes the 2004 findings that report, "an estimated 26.2 percent of Americans ages 18 and older — about one in four adults — suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year" (Kessler, Chiu, Demler, and Walters, 2005). Another alarming trend is the increasing number of mass shootings since 1999 in the United States (New York Daily News, 2013). Global Research confirms what the national news now reports regularly—random, public mass shootings in the United States are on the rise (Henriques, 2013). These incidents have taken place at many locales including college campuses, a nursing home, an army base, workplaces, a

cinema, public concert, department store, grocery store, temple, an immigration center, restaurant, coffee shop, and elementary, middle, and high schools—instilling fear and concern about safety in these shared spaces.

A partial explanation for these statistics not considered within most western-driven research is found here. It suggests there is an unnoticed link between the mental health status of the United States today and the increasing movement away from indigenous-based traditions—such as the “philosophy” of the pre-Socratics as this research demonstrates. The subsequent invention of a European worldview that abandoned a non-dualistic approach to living in relationship with the whole contributed to the West’s forgetting of a fundamental, universal condition of existence. This disconnection is reflected in many ways, including within modern Christianity, which has turned universal principles into an exclusionary religion. Doing so postures Christians not only against non-Christians, but other Christians as well, due to the attachment to slightly differing dogmatic beliefs that undermine universal truths and principles at the center of Christianity. This splintering is further perpetuated by loyalty to a particular groups’ leadership that determines the rules for inclusion and rejection of its members. The disease of the West, then, has even changed the fundamental nature of the Christian faith and did so almost immediately upon the inception of the Church.

The pathology of the West accelerated and continued unabatedly through the diabolical “conquest” of the western hemisphere as comprehensively and graphically detailed by Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) in her recently published book *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*. It is a history of profound consequences, and it remains hidden in the shadows of a nation—most often unconsciously—convinced of its righteous beginnings and expansion in the name of God, science, supremacy, and progress. Such mentality has since spread to whomever regardless of ethnicity, race, or background adopts a worldview that disregards the completeness of existence and becomes lost in the dangerous illusion of duality. The diseases of addiction, depression, anxiety, mood disorders, suicide, and violence prevalent within the United States today have a related spiritual aspect and are themselves conditions assuming this construction of duality.

Whelshula (1999) presents a good case that the European western paradigm was born out of psychopathology and that it maintains its dysfunction and re-traumatizes its youth through an enculturation process. She refers to it as the “colonial virus” (Whelshula, 1999, p. 12). Her premise is Europeans created the western worldview based on a dissociative, “objective universe,” and this marks the beginning of a psychological condition that detaches and disconnects from life (Whelshula, 1999, p. 28). Successive generations are raised in an environment that impairs their ability to bond and form healthy relationships, characteristics of post- traumatic stress and attachment disorders (Whelshula, 1999). These conditions create tendencies toward self-centeredness and narcissism, both descriptive of western society as a whole, as well as numerous other psychological, behavioral, and personality disorders.

If we look again at the early European culture as a child in its early psychological development, we can begin to see the roots of self-centeredness so characteristic of this paradigm. Due to some extended trauma to the early European culture, the culture was unable to cope, forcing its members to get stuck in the phase of self-centeredness. (Whelshula, 1999, p. 33)

The early and extended trauma mentioned above points to the severance of our most primal connection, a dissociative disease of the spirit and pathology of the psyche that grew from the violence of Roman Civilization, Christendom, and other warlord traditions on through the process of Euro-American colonization and post-colonialism and continues to spread across the world stage. Drawing from the Cree, Ojibway, and Powhatan traditions, this phenomenon has been named by indigenous scholar Forbes (2008) as the wétiko disease.

### **The Wétiko Disease**

In the foreword to *Columbus and Other Cannibals*, environmentalist Derrick Jensen says after considering possible psychological, sociological, philosophical, and economic reasons for the dominant culture’s “relentlessly, insanely, genocidally, ecocidally, suicidally destructive” behaviors, these patterns are best understood through Forbes’ (2008) exploration of the wétiko disease (p. 7). Wétiko is the Cree term for cannibalism, called

windigo in Ojibway and winitko in Powhatan (p. 54). More specifically, it refers to an evil person or spirit who terrorizes others and is diabolically wicked. Like a contagion, Forbes (2008) explores the etiology and epidemiology of wétiko. He refers to it as the “greatest epidemic sickness known to man” (Forbes, 2008, p. 17).

The rape of a woman, the rape of a land, and the rape of a people, they are all the same. And they are the same as the rape of the earth, the rape of the rivers, the rape of the forest, the rape of the air, the rape of the animals. Brutality knows no boundaries. Greed knows no limits. Perversion knows no borders. Arrogance knows no frontiers. Deceit knows no edges. (Forbes, 2008, p. 17)

This depravity is a form of psychosis. Forbes (2008) likens the wétiko psychoses to the concept of dehumanization in Freire’s (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It is a process that distorts the humanity of both the oppressed and the aggressor. More specifically, wétiko is the virulent soul sickness of rapists, imperialists, exploiters, etc., that Forbes strongly links to the rise of civilizations particularly over the last 2,000 years.

Forbes (2008) makes a strong case that wétiko is embedded within the evolutionary fabric of Europeans. He contends while Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, and Greeks played their part in spreading the virus, it was the Roman Empire that was its most dangerous carrier. Nation after nation was influenced by Rome’s barbaric colonial expansion marked by an immorally deviant ruling class and an oppressive system of church-state controls (Forbes, 2008, p. 83). The disease became rampant, and Columbus and the Europeans who followed carried the wétiko disease into the indigenous world of the Americas. Its arrival symbolizes “America’s” plunge into darkness. Wétiko continues to spread throughout the world wherever we traumatize, oppress, subdue, or disregard the natural indigenous mind.

This chapter concludes with an unexpected twist in this research story for the reader’s consideration. It comes from Leslie Marmon Silko’s novel *Ceremony*. In the book, Tayo, the main character, returns to the Laguna Pueblo reservation in New Mexico after having been held prisoner by the Japanese during WW II. Witnessing the death of his cousin, Tayo is plagued by debilitating and haunting images of the war in which he fought. He is confronted with reentering a racist white-oriented society and the continual



traumatization triggered by an Indian landscape stripped and polluted by the extraction of its uranium used to kill and injure tens of thousands in an atomic flash. The medicines and treatment administered are ineffective as he slips deeper into an internalized experience that only his Indian heritage can elucidate and remedy. His search for meaning is a ceremony making vital again a life that was on the edge of being consumed by darkness.

In Tayo's search, Benotie, a medicine man instrumental in his healing, warns him of the dangers of Indian witchery:

"That is the trickery of the witchcraft," he said. "They want us to believe all evil resides with white people. Then we will look no further to see what is really happening. They want us to separate ourselves from white people, to be ignorant and helpless as we watch our own destruction. But white people are only tools that the witchery manipulates; and I tell you, we can deal with white people, with their machines and their beliefs. We can because we invented white people; it was Indian witchery that made white people in the first place." (Silko, 1977, p. 132)

In poetic style, Silko describes how the witchery dreamt up white people to carry out their debauchery. Forbes (2008) discusses the dream-like nature of existence and how the universe arises from thought, through a mental process. The Shuar and other tribes of the Amazon and Andes teach the world is as you dream it (Perkins, 1994). Australian aborigines call this world the "Dreamtime." The pre-Socratic mystics suggest we are already asleep and this is the world from which we need awaken (Kingsley, 1999, 2003). This sounds confusing, but a simple response might be we are co-dreaming one another in the completeness of the forces of good and evil, of light and dark. As we become aware of the totality from which the duality emerges and is reflected in the dream including within—without resisting or attaching—we experience the wholeness of existence. The dark night of the soul relentlessly knocks and calls us back home.

## Chapter 8

### Shifting the Western Paradigm Toward Holism

#### **Coming Full Circle**

This chapter suggests several possibilities that emerge from engagement with this research story. The purpose has been to rekindle an ancient spirit dormant within the current western worldview by listening to what lies behind this inquiry. Such methodology is unorthodox within the sciences, but within indigenous methodologies, it is essential and makes our research whole. It brings us full circle to the wisdom held within many Native languages, traditions, and cosmologies. Although indigenous and western knowledge streams do indeed diverge, at their confluence they have always been one.

This research shows that around 2,500 years ago, an ancient tradition of the West, of the Archaic and Classical Greek pre-Socratic and Pythagorean eras, was fundamentally similar to many indigenous epistemologies and cosmologies. Although there are other nature-based traditions within the western knowledge stream that might find comparison with indigenous worldviews, this pre-Socratic tradition is of particular relevance because of its influence on the rise of western civilization. Apart from the rapacious imperial colonizers of the Athenian world lived a different brand of ancient Greeks. It was this tradition that was the cornerstone of western thought but that was quickly maligned, it seems, with its very entry into the Orphic-Pythagorean world. It was an oral tradition based on an experiential way of knowing the wholeness and unity of everything. This knowledge is critical because it points to a universal condition of existence, found within both indigenous and ancient western worldviews, of which there is no mutual exclusivity. It suggests there is oneness behind our diverse cultural differences. The practices of the pre-Socratic mystics are not the same as the traditions of American Indigenous peoples. Through their respective traditional expressions, however, each did allow for ways of knowing and experiencing a complex, intelligent, all-inclusive relatedness from the sub-atomic level throughout the borderless cosmos. The reclaiming of oneness cannot be made lightly. It cannot be yet another hegemonic attempt of the western ego to destroy, subsume, and appropriate indigenous knowledge and voices. Instead, diversification is our greatest

ally; it necessitates a deep responsibility implicit within a natural order that holds all differences equally and privileges none.

The story of the West, and particularly here as it intersects with American Indigenous peoples, shows not only the destructiveness but also the pathology that has ensued from the divergence from our Original Knowledge. In her dissertation *Healing through Decolonization*, Whelshula (1999) distinguishes between traditional knowledge and Original Knowledge.

Where traditional knowledge is culturally specific and the result of numerous interpretations, *Original Knowledge* just is. *Original Knowledge* embodies the sanctity and sacredness of *all life*. It is the creative expression of life itself. *Original Knowledge* is truth itself, regardless of whether we understand it or not. . . . As a people, we have become so caught up in the dogma of traditional knowledge that we have lost total sight of the truth. (p. 92)

This research presents challenges for both indigenous and non-Native audiences. Will western society concede its dualistic tendencies allowing its actions and systems to be guided and informed by Original Knowledge? Will Indigenous peoples trust in the West's ability to do so and not get caught by the same divisive entrapments as they reclaim life-ways steeped in Original Knowledge? Deloria (2012) suggests achieving this maturity and unity of knowledge is the next stage for humanity (p. 280).

Although no one is immune to the changing cycles of consciousness, the onus rests heavily with the West. Euro-Americans today have little idea of what has happened, who we are, where we come from, and why we continue to do what we do (Duran, 2013). There is a vacuousness of the West, a disconnection evidenced throughout modern-day society, our systems, and institutions. Richard Simonelli provides the following synopsis in the foreword to Duran's (2013) *The Condor and the Eagle*.

Increased human conflict, war, hate, corporate greed, nationalism, overpopulation, a toxic natural environment, environmental illnesses, global warming, escalating weaponry—these are some of the unfortunate legacies to our grandchildren. This pattern of conflict and distressed relationship is first and foremost an outcome of a divisive worldview. (p. xii)

This is the endgame and collapse of dualism. For the West, there is nowhere left to go except to complete the circle and awaken the western mind to the futility of doing otherwise.

### **Awakening the Western Mind**

Meyer (2011) quotes two indigenous thinkers who inspire throughout this inquiry and whose words are appropriate here.

*The great consciousness exists in my mind.* ~ Oscar Kawagley (p. 4)

*The world is mind.* ~ Vine Deloria, Jr. (p. 8)

The belief in dualism is fundamentally flawed because it is incomplete. It leaves us imbalanced. Many Americans are noticeably psychologically confused and spiritually lost (Duran, 2013, p. 31). One of the more difficult divisions to reconcile is between *good* and *evil*. Generally, we aspire toward everything *good* while trying to rid ourselves of *evil*, when both forces exist equally within our existence. What we suppress, deny, battle, or do not know goes underground into the hidden recesses of the unconscious. To deconstruct the western worldview is to make conscious what is unconscious bringing into awareness the wholeness of a conditioned, dichotomous mind.

According to the psychological concept of projection or transference, everything unconscious is projected outwardly onto a world of mirrors that reflects what is within. What we think, say, and do to others, we do to ourselves and hence the whole of creation. The unconscious transference between inner and outer is our pathos. When the shadow of our projection is exposed, the grip of wétiko weakens and begins to fade. Alleviating the disease relies heavily on an attunement to and contemplative approach toward the nature of life as found in many spiritual traditions of the world and specifically as discussed throughout this writing on indigenous ways of knowing and ancient Greek mysticism. Its resolution is often accelerated by an earnest request to know the condition, to explore this inner territory and cosmology without getting lost or consumed by it, and to reconcile the divisions within.

Levy (2013), heavily influenced by Jung and eastern mysticism, draws on the work of Forbes (2008) and offers insights about dispelling the wétiko disease. He suggests the

manifestation of evil also serves a great purpose. It has the potential to illuminate our original nature of wholeness that Levy (2013) likens to the mirror that casts the reflections. He goes so far as to say evil is necessary. The danger is that for us to come to know, to be in relationship with, wétiko, we must engage this phenomenon whose nature is also entrapment. When unconscious, it controls our minds with illusionary power and destroys life. Simultaneously its very presence evokes and calls forth our original nature that is impervious to wétiko's influence. Wétiko transforms itself in our acceptance and awareness of it. Levy (2013) proposes this question for our consideration.

When the opposites come together, a profound question arises: is wetiko the deepest evil, or is it a Judas-like entity of utmost necessity, evoking its own evolutionary transmutation, and thereby an expression of the highest good? When the opposites start to reveal themselves as being indistinguishable, wetiko outs itself to be a reconciling symbol whose function is transcendence that unites the opposites within us. (p. 706)

In the context of this dissertation, this may seem a rationale for the behavior of the West. It explains our actions in elusive psychological and spiritual terms that surely seem convenient for the western mind. This perhaps is our most difficult hurdle to cross. It brings together victim and perpetrator and suggests both need, possibly create and dream the other, to awaken to a greater condition of our inseparability.

If we return to Kingsley's (1999, 2003) work and the archetype of the colonizer, we are further encouraged to remedy an ancient split in the fabric of our consciousness. In the traditions of Apollo, the colonizer was a mystic who moved and inwardly grew a practice that was in harmony with their surroundings. In Native America, the colonizer—influenced by generations of an increasingly imperialistic mentality—became a carrier of the wétiko disease stealing, consuming, and destroying life, justified by an invented worldview no longer grounded in the natural. This story of the West pieced together in these chapters helps unite these opposites, making conscious this grievous divide. It suggests an epistemology of Original Knowledge safeguarded within indigenous traditions is also found at the roots of western civilization. It is a way of knowing that necessitates our conscious

and responsible participation and calls for nothing less than the awakening of the western mind.

### **Indigenizing the Colonizer**

We are experiencing a gradual movement toward the West's indigenization. Over the decades, there have been advances in indigenizing education with Native worldviews, languages, values, etc. Western systems in general, however, are resistant to and fearful of such change. While indigenizing western institutions is a natural and evolutionary step for humanity, there is little mention of the need to indigenize the colonizer. Larry Mercurieff, Aleut Elder from the Bering Sea's Pribilof Islands, often quotes Einstein who said, "No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it." To awaken the consciousness of the West, we must seek our own indigenous roots with values commensurate with those of Indigenous peoples tied to land, respect for all life, and principles of wholeness.

The connection to these homelands, to Turtle Island and its Ancestors, is indigenizing the settlers, as Diane Longboat explains.

The power of the land is undeniable. Mother Earth holds the bones of our Ancestors within Her. The Coming Faces are rising from the land. Both the past and the future are embodied in the land. Our homelands define our way of life, governance language, expression of culture, food sovereignty, songs, dance, clothing, art and economy. The land is indigenizing the newcomers across the generations of their visit here. The land here provides them with access to our Ancestors in their dreams and visions as they walk in our homelands. Those visions call the settlers to a spiritual awakening and pursuit of Spirit that can only be found when they walk on the faces of their own Ancestors in their own homelands." (personal communication, March 26, 2014)

These teachings bring Indigenous and non-Native peoples together consciously into a sacred alliance whose time has come. To indigenize the colonizer is to listen to the Original Voices of this land as they connect throughout all time and space linking us with our indigenous Ancestors. As the edges of our divisions blur, the pathways of all the Ancestors

across the traditions converge, into the “Indigenous One”—“a point in antiquity of the human soul” (Gustafson, 1997, loc. 114).

The conflict of the West is reflected by the crisis of the natural world. Our fragmented value system that teaches that the Earth belongs to us rather than we to the Earth is creating peak levels of stress environmentally and personally. Although we continue to tax the earth’s ecosystems with our insatiable appetite to exploit resources and make excessive profits, we are not in control of her regenerative cycles that seek balance to what humankind disrupts. Her readjustments easily wipe us from her surface or swallow us whole. Both indigenous and non-Native authors suggest our hope lies with healing our relationship with the land and turning to its Original Peoples for their expertise and help (Duran, 2013; Gustafson, 1997).

Behind the dysfunction, the complacency, the arrogance, and ignorance, there is a great yearning that many westerners cannot even name. There is confusion and sadness about our lost indigenous-based identity. It is particularly obvious by the strong gravitation of western society toward other spiritual practices, identities, and philosophies. The grief buried in this land of what has been perpetrated as a result of forgetting our Original Knowledge is our collective despair. When some non-Natives witness and feel the power within indigenous circles, it triggers a longing for what is missing within western society. As Americans, we may think we are indigenous to this place. Just because our European, colonial forefathers invaded and “conquered” these lands and successive generations have been born and raised here, or that our ancestors later immigrated to America to seek a better life, does not make us indigenous in the same way as the Original Peoples who emerged from this place or migrated here before our arrival. In a cultural, social, and political definition, we are not indigenous to this particular area. We are, however, indigenous to Earth and Spirit. With this responsibility, we assume our place within the circle of humanity or else it is incomplete.

In Greek, the word *indigenous* derives from *genes*—one born—and *indus*—within, one born from within (Gustafson, 1997, loc. 487). Meyer (2011) says indigenous is synonymous with “that which has endured” (p. 7). In a broader sense, indigenous is a state of being, a way of living that we can mature into. We can reclaim our indigeneity through

connection with western, indigenous-based traditions and conscious relationships with this land, its peoples, and all levels of existence.

This notion of indigenizing the colonizer is not some ideal about returning to a romanticized past but, as Indigenous peoples have long demonstrated, the ability to adapt to rapidly changing times and landscapes. The indigenization of western concepts and systems by Native peoples are modern-day examples of and testament to these enduring abilities and skills throughout time. Further, the indigenization of western peoples, often catalyzed by the land itself, may resituate Native peoples as innovators rather than victims, helping to reconcile what has been a most painful divide.

### **Rethinking Wellness**

This research offers a broad and thought-provoking interpretation of wellness. It suggests that our conscious relationship and engagement with a primordial wholeness—to an Intelligence that contains and expresses through all of existence—is the essence of wellness. It cannot be contained by any definition because it is beyond the scope of all human disciplines and is not beholden to rational thought. Its elusiveness was obvious when convening the *Alaska Native Dialogue on Healing and Wellness*, the project that began this dissertation. There were as many ideas about wellness as there were participants in the discussion. Our personal life experiences draw us into an ever-expanding meaning of wellness.

In the world of the pre-Socratics, healing comes from somewhere else, not the human realm; healing finds us (Kingsley, 1999, 2003). We simply prepare the soil, the ground of our being, and wait for its arrival. The West in its excessive drive to cure, eradicate disease, modify behavior, and prolong life—in its hyperactivity to find answers—cannot hear what calls from the wholeness of our divinity. If we suspend the mind, the search for wellness becomes a journey into the medicine carried within.

This is extremely difficult for the western mind with its anthropocentric view that it is the center of all life. Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing again challenge that perspective with highly sophisticated living traditions based on life's intrinsic interrelatedness. The diseased mind cannot believe that the annihilation of its separateness



means the repatriating of its inherent wellness. The imbalanced ego retaliates more fiercely, fighting and struggling as it scouts out any possible route of escape from its exposure. There is simply no way out, and in acquiescing comes its final liberation. It makes its last stand, but this time with a calm affinity that reclaims wellness and what has always been whole.

### **Shaping a New Worldview**

Awakening the western mind, indigenizing the colonizer, and rethinking wellness combine to shift the vantage point of the West and shape a new worldview. It is a philosophical proposition but meant for our immediate application. There is an urgent need for unity, not sameness, and that point cannot be stressed enough. Duran (2013) says we need “a new worldview that everyone can embrace” (p. 4). Modern physics based on quantum theory points the way to a universe of non-duality that Indigenous peoples have long known. Science is not the answer, but it is one of many research tools. We need a unified worldview based on a moral imperative found within indigenous traditions. It is the West that needs to regain its dignity and come into alignment with values and practices that consider *all life* in the decisions we make. It is Indigenous peoples to whom we must turn to for help in applying what has been forgotten within the West’s heritage. Only as our minds and hearts open can we truly join with Indigenous peoples to find ways forward that are accountable to the whole and celebrate our relatedness with the Infinite. Our request must be sincere.

First, there must be recognition of and apology for an Indian holocaust that goes largely unnoticed within the American psyche and around the world. It must be made conscious if there is to be any reconciliation. There have been some steps in that direction. Australia, Canada, and the United States have offered some form of apology to the Indigenous peoples of the lands they now govern. None, however, name their actions as genocide nor ask for help with the failings of the colonizer. In December 1992, Australian Prime Minister Keating introduced the 1993 International Year of the World’s Indigenous Peoples. He was the first head of state of a colonial nation to acknowledge their

government's criminal and inhumane treatment of Indigenous peoples. This is an excerpt from his speech:

And as I say, the starting point might be to recognize that the problems start with us non-Aboriginal Australians. It begins, I think, with that act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practiced discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us. With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. (Keating, transcript, December 10, 1992)

More than a decade later, Canadian Prime Minister Harper offered a public apology for the Indian residential school system and asked for the forgiveness of Aboriginal peoples (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Canada Development, 2008). In 2010, under President Obama, an apology tagged onto the Department of Defense Appropriations Act was couched within the document unbeknownst to Native communities and the general American public (Charles, 2012). The United States' apology to Native peoples reads as follows:

Sec. 8113. (a) Acknowledgement and Apology—The United States, acting through Congress—

- (1) recognizes the special legal and political relationship Indian tribes have with the United States and the solemn covenant with the land we share;
- (2) commends and honors Native Peoples for the thousands of years that they have stewarded and protected this land;
- (3) recognizes that there have been years of official depredations, ill-conceived policies and the breaking of covenants by the Federal Government regarding Indian tribes;
- (4) apologizes on behalf of the people of the United States to all Native Peoples for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples by citizens of the United States;

(5) expresses its regret for the ramifications of former wrongs and its commitment to build on the positive relationships of the past and present to move toward a brighter future where all the people of this land live reconciled as brothers and sisters, and harmoniously steward and protect this land together;

(6) urges the President to acknowledge the wrongs of the United States against Indian tribes in the history of the United States in order to bring healing to this land; and

(7) commends the State governments that have begun reconciliation efforts with recognized Indian tribes located in their boundaries and encourages all State governments similarly to work toward reconciling relationships with Indian tribes within their boundaries. (Charles, 2012, para. 3)

Charles (2012), of Navajo and Dutch ancestry, acknowledges the apology but expresses disappointment of its generic wording, its inclusion in an unrelated document, and that it was not made publically nor presented clearly to Native Elders. On the third anniversary of the signing of the Act, Charles (2012) called for an assemblage of people in front of the United States Capitol Building where the apology was read and translated into several Native languages.

It is imperative we make public our unacknowledged histories; a transparent and sincere apology is one small step toward this needed unwavering commitment. The recently published text, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* by Dunbar-Ortiz (2014), makes explicitly clear, in no uncertain terms, Euro-American colonial settlers' and the United States government's motives and purposeful complicity in the dark history of the past 522 years. Page after page presents a most disturbing exposé that emerges from the shadows to reveal the rhetoric of a nation that continues to erase, minimize, and justify— while injuriously strengthening—an on-going colonial narrative. Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) emphasizes that education can help to transform society. She reminds readers of the late Jack Forbes who “always stressed that while living persons are not responsible for what their ancestors did, they are responsible for the society they live in, which is a product of that past” (loc. 4043). Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) suggests a starting place for the future:

The process rightfully starts by honoring the treaties the United States made with Indigenous nations, by restoring all sacred sites, starting with the Black Hills and including most federally held parks and land and all stolen sacred items and body parts, and by payment of sufficient reparations for the reconstruction and expansion of Native nations. In the process, the continent will be radically reconfigured, physically and psychologically. (loc. 4043–4057)

The world deserves to know this side of how the United States became a new nation. We owe our deepest apologies to American Indigenous peoples, the land, and natural worlds. Far beyond mere words, we owe our resolute commitment to respond and act from a holistic worldview that holds the pain of our histories while allowing for new possibilities now and into the future.

### **Signs of a Foreseen Alliance**

If we look closely, there are suggestive signs of our future that have long been in view. In Winnipeg, architectural historian Albo (2007) decodes esoteric symbolism encoded within public buildings. In a fascinating documentary of the discovery of the hermetically inspired architecture of the Manitoba legislative building that airs on PBS, Albo joins with Anishnabe Elder David Courchene to interpret its indigenous meaning (Courchene, Pickard, & Pickard, 2009). Here again western esoteric mysticism intersects with American Indigenous sacred laws. Etched into the outside of the building, an American Indian and Roman soldier flank each side of a war chest, shown in figure 6. The chest, Albo believes, represents the Ark of the Covenant and Courchene adds contains seven indigenous laws that correspond to the building's sacred geometry (Courchene et al., 2009). These seven laws of love, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, humility, and truth are the foundation of a new and prophesied alliance (Courchene et al., 2009).



*Figure 6: Ark of the Covenant & Seven Sacred Laws*  
Retrieved from <http://vigilantcitizen.com/>

In the United States, atop the Capitol dome, Gustafson (1997) brings another prominent figure to his readers' attention, shown in figure 7. The Statue of Freedom faces the east, and although she was not meant to be Indian as Gustafson (1997) explains, her feathered headdress symbolizes a future vision. It unites the spirit of Indigenous peoples with the shifting of the western worldview toward a new paradigm based on a timeless alliance of holism.



*Figure 7: Statue of Freedom*  
Retrieved from <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>

In these chapters, this story has been roughly traced, perhaps for the first time that links together these events in this way. It is inspired by an indigenous-based tradition at the roots of western civilization and its relationship with indigenous worldviews and epistemologies. It travels from Parmenides, Pythagoras, and Empedocles, through the rise of the Roman Empire, to the shores of Turtle Island, through the darkness of a fragmented worldview, toward the indigenizing of the colonial settlers, and to the hopeful possibility of unifying an ancient transgression between indigenous and western Original Knowledge streams and ways of knowing.

A possible next step is to share this story with interested Elders and communities; it deserves their response. Just before completing this writing, I learned that some Tlingit Elders of southeast Alaska have discussed the teachings of Parmenides in relation to their cosmologies, and I was advised to consult with their Elders. Such community-based discussions is an exciting proposition. More broadly, the combined engagement of Indigenous and non-Native peoples with a completeness that has always been is the next hopeful chapter for the whole of humanity.



## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

The search for this topic began with a compelling interest in indigenous psychologies and traditional healing particularly related to mental and behavioral health issues. When convening the *Alaska Native Dialogue on Healing and Wellness* at the start, I recognized the equal need for locally driven initiatives from within Native communities as well as the integration of cultural approaches into existing systems of care. I was acutely aware of the generational impact of colonization and an ongoing colonial narrative often unconsciously driving western society that affects the health and wellbeing of Native youth as they are forced to walk between two very different worldviews. I encountered barriers to initiating any substantial or systemic change within the existing mental health system, as wellness is most often addressed from an imbalanced worldview from which the culture of the clinic arises.

The new learning that ignited this research began when I finally turned my focus from Alaska Native and other indigenous communities toward the healing of the western mind. Within these pages, the lens turns back onto the West and the critical need to know who we are and why we do what we do. It calls for nothing less than a seismic shift in consciousness, a fundamental realignment of our worldview toward a fundamental axiom of holism. Knowledge about the wholeness of existence where there exists no condition of mutual exclusivity is not a new revelation. It was understood by the Ancestors of many traditions, particularly of American Indigenous peoples and certain pre-Socratics as explored in these chapters. Their respective traditions provided instructions for the application of this wisdom within the nature and contexts of their lives.

Indigenous frameworks and methodologies advance such knowledge and ways of knowing for Native peoples today. What is less obvious is they are also indigenizing the West to what we have long left behind. The reconnection with our original nature is the repatriating of wellness within, with Indigenous peoples, the land, and *all of life*. Together, our unified and collaborative participation with a timelessly interrelated indigeneity may be the next conscious and creative leap for humanity.





# Appendix A

## IRB Approval



### Institutional Review Board

909 N Koyukuk Dr. Suite 212, P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

(907) 474-7800  
(907) 474-5444 fax  
fyirb@uaf.edu  
www.uaf.edu/irb

January 18, 2012

To: Mike Koskey  
Principal Investigator  
From: University of Alaska Fairbanks IRB  
Re: [283710-2] Alaska Native Dialogue on Healing and Wellness: A Pilot Study

Thank you for submitting the Revision referenced below. The submission was handled by Expedited Review under the requirements of 45 CFR 46.110, which identifies the categories of research eligible for expedited review.

Title:	Alaska Native Dialogue on Healing and Wellness: A Pilot Study
Received:	January 6, 2012
Expedited Category:	7
Action:	APPROVED
Effective Date:	January 18, 2012
Expiration Date:	January 18, 2013

#### Required Information:

The PI and her faculty advisor have been very responsive to IRB requested changes and have submitted a substantially improved revised protocol.

Since the venue is now changed, I would suggest that the flier also contain the physical address of the new location (Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitors Center).

Since the revised consent now contains selection options for the participant, I would suggest that the instruction be modified to "Please INITIAL the boxes that apply." Initialing is a more deliberate indication of consent.

All of the IRB required changes have been satisfactorily completed and this project can be approved.

This action is included on the January 19, 2012 IRB Agenda.

*No changes may be made to this project without the prior review and approval of the IRB. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in research scope, research tools, consent documents, personnel, or record storage location.*



## Appendix B

### Alaska Native Dialogue on Healing and Wellness

#### Summary of Participant Responses

##### **1. What does healing and wellness mean?**

- Mental health
- Physical health
- Mindfulness of body
- Being balanced
- The opposite of illness
- Viewed differently (by people)
- Everyone has their own way (path) to health and wellness.
- A long time ago, everyone use to be on the same path.
- We all belong to one of the “tribes” – water, sky, earth. [fire]
- We know people and places because our ancestors were there before
- There’s concern about younger people.
- Healing is found in getting to know who you are, what we eat, our environment
- Go back to what we are raised on
- Physical, emotional, and mental healing
- Spirituality is most important in personal healing.
- Use to respect Elders. Now Elders are pushed aside.
- There is a lack of communication.
- We don’t talk to one another. Cell phones, computers, and TV take over.
- We need to recognize and honor our cultural past.
- We need to have better suicide awareness.
- Deal with drugs and alcohol, then suicide
- People struggle. They don’t have answers.
- Personal confrontation – look and try to understand who you are
- You can become who you were created to be – a whole person
- Get kids away from Fairbanks, away from society and into God’s creation. We are earth people.
- People often don’t ask for help. There is help if you ask. Elders will do anything good you ask for. Who are we? Where did we come from? These are questions to ask Elders. They will be happy to help.
- Experience the peace of nature.

- Everyone is going faster and faster. We need to slow down and visit more, be concerned about each other. We use to help each other out.
- We now need to use social workers to solve problems. Students began counseling. It's hard to keep kids in the family. There are different views of family and individuality. Kids are pulled away after listening to outside counselors.
- We need to try to incorporate some of the things we used to do together.
- Native health and wellness has been co-opted by western healthcare. Health is all about providers and making money.
- We turn our health over to providers. We lose our way of healing. We lose our effectiveness and direction by relying on providers.
- Many young Native men are now over 40 years old and just now learning about themselves.
- Have a blend of western and traditional ways
- Look for the source of the symptoms.
- Kids need the skills – schoolteachers - BUT family needs to learn what is really important. They appreciate it later and pass the lessons, teachings to others
- Learn to speak the language of the kids.
- Holding the eagle feather opens the kids up. It brings healing.

## **2. What does decolonizing mean, and how does it relate to healing?**

- Things changed too fast.
- Assimilation
- Healing begins right here with me.
- When we say I'm accountable, Eldership begins.
- Ability to share excitement of life
- Need balance of humility and inner strength to attract others to help
- There are many students of mixed heritage. They don't know their backgrounds.
- Western cultures don't know their ancestors. Indigenous peoples feel their ancestry in their DNA. Help students seek out who they are and their backgrounds.
- Grew up in a place with all cultures. Raised with values that are now on the posters
- Taught by "This was the way I was raised"
- Decolonizing and indigenizing don't translate.
- Decolonizing is essential for healing. Know what people had to surrender, their Nativeness, to western culture. Two different peoples, one dominating the other. Need to understand that history.
- Know what it was like before "they" got here
- People died off – disease – Great Death
- Churches tried to influence your spirit.

- God never left Native people. Native people are powerful people just with their memories. We have to put it back together again.
- Native Awakenings – support group for those with addictions
- Example of indigenizing power plant on Navajo reservation – changed not just workforce but behaviors. There was more respect. This is a grassroots example. Medical benefits pay for traditional healing and medicine men.
- There is hope for Doyon (Native regional corporation)

### **3. What do you think about starting an indigenous healing and wellness program in Fairbanks?**

- Spirituality is the foundation
- Incorporate ceremony
- Importance of being in nature
- Women's and men's teaching circles
- A gathering space like a village/community
- Programs like South Central Foundation
- Native Awakenings support group
- Meet again



## Appendix C

### Guiding Principles of Mindful Inquiry

- A. Examine the historical, political, economic, and cultural circumstances in which you are working.
- B. As a mindful inquirer, you look into your own psychology, psyche, childhood emotional experiences, and so on, and how they may be distorting your perceptions and actions.
- C. Be sensitive to the way in which the communicative processes occurring in the terms of the norms of “competent communication” which include “understandability,” “truthfulness,” “truth,” and “rightness.”
- D. Link your inquiry to the project of reducing suffering or increasing freedom, justice, or happiness in the world, either locally or globally or both.
- E. Pay attention to the nature of the phenomena beings investigated by writing a deep phenomenological description of one’s own experience of it.
- F. Use “imaginative variations” to elucidate hidden aspects of the phenomenon. (How would it change if certain element of it changed).
- G. Ask yourself these questions. “What modes of consciousness do I bring to bear in the situation?” And “What typifications am I using?”
- H. Get description of the experience of those involved. Determine the typifications they use to function in their situations.
- I. Describe the relevant lifeworlds and intersubjective communities in which the situations occur. Look at the stocks of knowledge, the effects of predecessors, the interlocking web of typifications.
- J. Look at the elements of your texts as texts. Elucidate the levels of preexisting interpretations of the situations and their relevance.
- K. Allow the movements of understanding to happen on their own time.
- L. Through presence and intention, allow for a release of new meaning to occur. Make a space, a clearing, for new “beings” to emerge.
- M. Be aware of your personal addiction or addictive needs with regard to your inquiry.



- N. Become aware of how you define and construct the “other” of your research as other.
- O. Through the practice of compassion and right conduct, pay attention to the suffering of sentient beings in the world, and ask yourself what kind of inquiry and action would diminish that suffering.
- P. By following the Eightfold Path of Buddhism, focused on rightness of thought and action, and increasing your own mindfulness and nonattachment to things and desires, increase your capacity to experience ecstasy, particularly in relation to both the object and process of inquiry. (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, pp. 44-53)

Appendix D  
Parmenides' Journey into the Underworld

*The mares that carry me as far as longing can reach  
rode on, once they had come and fetched me onto the legendary  
road of the divinity that carries the man who knows  
through the vast and dark unknown. And on I was carried  
as the mares, aware just where to go, kept carrying me  
straining at the chariot: and young women led the way.*

*And the axle in the hubs let out the sound of a pipe  
blazing from the pressure of the two well-rounded wheels  
at either side, as they rapidly led on: young women, girls,  
daughters of the Sun who had left the mansions of Night  
for the light and pushed back the veils from their faces  
with their hands.*

*There are the gates of the pathways of Night and Day,  
held fast in place between the lintel above and a threshold of stone;  
and they reach up into the heavens, filled with gigantic doors.*

*And the keys—that now open, now lock—are held fast by  
Justice: she who always demands exact returns. And with  
soft seductive words the girls cunningly persuaded her to  
push back immediately, just for them, the bar that bolts  
the gates. And as the doors flew open, making the bronze  
axles with their pegs and nails spin—now one, now the other—  
in their pipes they created a gaping chasm. Straight through and  
on the girls held fast their course for the chariot and horses,  
straight down the road.*

*And the goddess welcomed me kindly, and took  
my right hand in hers and spoke these words as she addressed me:*

*'Welcome young man, partnered by immortal charioteers,  
reaching our home with the mares that carry you. For it was*

*no hard fate that sent you travelling this road—so far away  
from the beaten track of humans but Rightness, and Justice.  
And what's needed is for you to learn all things: both the unshaken  
heart of persuasive Truth and the opinions of mortals,  
in which there's nothing that can truthfully be trusted at all.  
But even so, this too you will learn—how beliefs based on  
appearance ought to be believable as they travel all through  
all there is.'* (Kingsley, 1999, pp. 53-54)

## Appendix E

### Suppressed Speech of Wamsutta (Frank B.) James, Wampanoag

I speak to you as a man—a Wampanoag Man. I am a proud man, proud of my ancestry, my accomplishments won by a strict parental direction ("You must succeed—your face is a different color in this small Cape Cod community!"). I am a product of poverty and discrimination from these two social and economic diseases. I, and my brothers and sisters, have painfully overcome, and to some extent we have earned the respect of our community. We are Indians first—but we are termed "good citizens." Sometimes we are arrogant but only because society has pressured us to be so.

It is with mixed emotion that I stand here to share my thoughts. This is a time of celebration for you—celebrating an anniversary of a beginning for the white man in America. A time of looking back, of reflection. It is with a heavy heart that I look back upon what happened to my People.

Even before the Pilgrims landed it was common practice for explorers to capture Indians, take them to Europe and sell them as slaves for 220 shillings apiece. The Pilgrims had hardly explored the shores of Cape Cod for four days before they had robbed the graves of my ancestors and stolen their corn and beans. Mourt's Relation describes a searching party of sixteen men. Mourt goes on to say that this party took as much of the Indians' winter provisions as they were able to carry.

Massasoit, the great Sachem of the Wampanoag, knew these facts, yet he and his People welcomed and befriended the settlers of the Plymouth Plantation. Perhaps he did this because his Tribe had been depleted by an epidemic. Or his knowledge of the harsh oncoming winter was the reason for his peaceful acceptance of these acts. This action by Massasoit was perhaps our biggest mistake. We, the Wampanoag, welcomed you, the white man, with open arms, little knowing that it was the beginning of the end; that before 50 years were to pass, the Wampanoag would no longer be a free people.

What happened in those short 50 years? What has happened in the last 300 years? History gives us facts and there were atrocities; there were broken promises - and most of these centered around land ownership. Among ourselves we understood that there were boundaries, but never before had we had to deal with fences and stone walls. But the white

man had a need to prove his worth by the amount of land that he owned. Only ten years later, when the Puritans came, they treated the Wampanoag with even less kindness in converting the souls of the so-called "savages." Although the Puritans were harsh to members of their own society, the Indian was pressed between stone slabs and hanged as quickly as any other "witch."

And so down through the years there is record after record of Indian lands taken and, in token, reservations set up for him upon which to live. The Indian, having been stripped of his power, could only stand by and watch while the white man took his land and used it for his personal gain. This the Indian could not understand; for to him, land was survival, to farm, to hunt, to be enjoyed. It was not to be abused. We see incident after incident, where the white man sought to tame the "savage" and convert him to the Christian ways of life. The early Pilgrim settlers led the Indian to believe that if he did not behave, they would dig up the ground and unleash the great epidemic again.

The white man used the Indian's nautical skills and abilities. They let him be only a seaman—but never a captain. Time and time again, in the white man's society, we Indians have been termed "low man on the totem pole."

Has the Wampanoag really disappeared? There is still an aura of mystery. We know there was an epidemic that took many Indian lives—some Wampanoags moved west and joined the Cherokee and Cheyenne. They were forced to move. Some even went north to Canada! Many Wampanoag put aside their Indian heritage and accepted the white man's way for their own survival. There are some Wampanoag who do not wish it known they are Indian for social or economic reasons.

What happened to those Wampanoags who chose to remain and live among the early settlers? What kind of existence did they live as "civilized" people? True, living was not as complex as life today, but they dealt with the confusion and the change. Honesty, trust, concern, pride, and politics wove themselves in and out of their [the Wampanoags'] daily living. Hence, he was termed crafty, cunning, rapacious, and dirty.

History wants us to believe that the Indian was a savage, illiterate, uncivilized animal. A history that was written by an organized, disciplined people, to expose us as an unorganized and undisciplined entity. Two distinctly different cultures met. One thought they must control life; the other believed life was to be enjoyed, because nature decreed it.

Let us remember, the Indian is and was just as human as the white man. The Indian feels pain, gets hurt, and becomes defensive, has dreams, bears tragedy and failure, suffers from loneliness, needs to cry as well as laugh. He, too, is often misunderstood.

The white man in the presence of the Indian is still mystified by his uncanny ability to make him feel uncomfortable. This may be the image the white man has created of the Indian; his "savageness" has boomeranged and isn't a mystery; it is fear; fear of the Indian's temperament!

High on a hill, overlooking the famed Plymouth Rock, stands the statue of our great Sachem, Massasoit. Massasoit has stood there many years in silence. We the descendants of this great Sachem have been a silent people. The necessity of making a living in this materialistic society of the white man caused us to be silent. Today, I and many of my people are choosing to face the truth. We ARE Indians!

Although time has drained our culture, and our language is almost extinct, we the Wampanoags still walk the lands of Massachusetts. We may be fragmented, we may be confused. Many years have passed since we have been a people together. Our lands were invaded. We fought as hard to keep our land as you the whites did to take our land away from us. We were conquered, we became the American prisoners of war in many cases, and wards of the United States Government, until only recently.

Our spirit refuses to die. Yesterday we walked the woodland paths and sandy trails. Today we must walk the macadam highways and roads. We are uniting. We're standing not in our wigwams but in your concrete tent. We stand tall and proud, and before too many moons pass we'll right the wrongs we have allowed to happen to us.

We forfeited our country. Our lands have fallen into the hands of the aggressor. We have allowed the white man to keep us on our knees. What has happened cannot be changed, but today we must work towards a more humane America, a more Indian America, where men and nature once again are important; where the Indian values of honor, truth, and brotherhood prevail.

You the white man are celebrating an anniversary. We the Wampanoags will help you celebrate in the concept of a beginning. It was the beginning of a new life for the Pilgrims. Now, 350 years later it is a beginning of a new determination for the original American: the American Indian.

There are some factors concerning the Wampanoags and other Indians across this vast nation. We now have 350 years of experience living amongst the white man. We can now speak his language. We can now think as a white man thinks. We can now compete with him for the top jobs. We're being heard; we are now being listened to. The important point is that along with these necessities of everyday living, we still have the spirit, we still have the unique culture, we still have the will and, most important of all, the determination to remain as Indians. We are determined, and our presence here this evening is living testimony that this is only the beginning of the American Indian, particularly the Wampanoag, to regain the position in this country that is rightfully ours.

Wamsutta September 10, 1970.

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